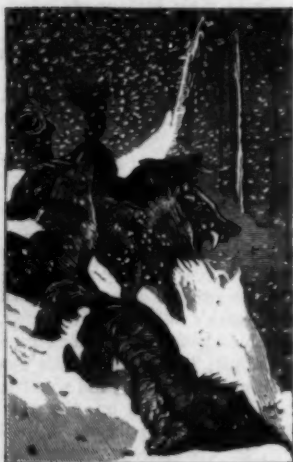


# LONDON SOCIETY.

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## AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF CHARLES MORDAUNT.

By HENRY KINGSLEY.



'The wolves came and blew under the door, as soon as Father Moriarty began singing.'

**L**ORD BARNSTAPLE presents his compliments to the Reverend James Mordaunt, and will do himself the honour to wait on him at one P.M., on Thursday next, the 27th of July, to discuss parochial matters. An answer would oblige.'

*Crouches Castle, 25/7/53.*

This document looks innocent and harmless at first, but it fell like a thunderbolt in the quiet household of the Reverend James

Mordaunt. No one was with him when he received it but his daughter Alice; he at once handed it to her, and announced his intention of selling out the only property he had in the world, 1,200*l.*, 3 per Cents, and emigrating to western Canada.

'I don't think I would do that, pa,' said Alice, 'you are too old, my dear. Stay here and fight it out.'

'I am only forty-five,' returned the Reverend James, and I am as strong as a horse, but now that this young prig of a nobleman has come to back up the Rector and the Archdeacon, I had better go at once than stay too long.'

'We don't know that he is a prig, pa,' said Alice.

'He took a first,' said the Reverend James, 'and I know what that means with a nobleman.'

'Well, my dear,' said Alice, 'you would have taken one if you could have afforded the coaching.'

'It don't matter,' said the Reverend James. His mind is poisoned against me, and I will not stand it any longer.'

'You don't *know* that his mind is poisoned against you,' urged Alice. 'Hear the man.'

'I suppose I must,' said the Reverend James, with a vexed air. 'But I'll tell you what I will do. I will walk over to the Bishop

this afternoon, get a bed there, and come back to-morrow morning.'

'Could not you borrow farmer Willesden's horse,' asked Alice; 'fourteen miles is a long walk.'

'I can't borrow his horse, for to-morrow is market day, and he will want it. He would lend it to me and say he did not want it, but I am obliged to him too much already, God bless him! How much money have we?'

'Thirteen and sixpence.'

'Give me five, old girl,' said the Reverend James, 'because, if the palace is full, I must sleep at the inn. Where is Charles?'

'Oh! I forgot to tell you. Charles has got three days' work with the railway surveyors, at seven-and-sixpence a day. His mathematics come in very well there: I wish it would lead to something permanent.'

'Is there anything owing in the village?' asked the Reverend James.

'One-and-sixpence to the butcher,' said Alice, 'but I will slip round and pay that.'

'Do so, old girl, and if Charles comes home before I am back, give him my love, and tell him where I am gone.' And so the reverend gentleman put two half-crowns in his pocket, took his stick, and walked stoutly away to the Bishop.

The Rev. James Mordaunt was a curate of Sprowston, with a salary of 120*l.* a year, and a private income of 85*l.* arising from the 1,200*l.* before spoken of. On this income he had married, and his wife had died three years afterwards, leaving him to bring up a boy and a girl, Charles and Alice, in the most grinding poverty. Charles was now twenty-one, and his sister nineteen, both of them marvels of beauty and intelligence. Mr. Mordaunt had nothing to give them but learning, example, and love, and he gave them all these three things without stint. Too

hopelessly poor to give much in charity, he was more deeply loved by the poor than any man for miles round; and his son and daughter shared the love which was their father's due, and they deserved it. Knowing absolutely nothing of the outside world, except what their father had told them from old recollections, they grew up perfectly innocent and contented, supposing that other poor people's lives were much like their own.

Their father was a tremendous power in their little world, there was no appeal from him. The magistrates made room for his shabby coat on the bench, and were relieved when he was gone, taking his handsome, inexorable face and his withering oratory with him. The boldest farmer grew pale if he appeared to eat his eighteenpenny worth at the market ordinary; they wondered among one another whose turn it was for a few stinging and never-to-be-forgotten words. The lash of the man's satire brought blood, and blood which took a long time in healing; but the man's life was so blameless, so noble, and so pure, that, as years went on, the very stupidest farmers began to see that he was living consistently that life which he discoursed on every Sunday from the pulpit—the life of Christ. He made them fear him first, they got to love him afterwards.

He came suddenly from Oxford with a young wife, and he at once began fighting everybody; he took up the case of the agricultural poor, and fought the farmers more like a fiend than a decent English clergyman. He had no money, which was a disadvantage; and he had less than no influence, which was possibly worse. But he fought on for all that, through thick and thin. It was a long

and dark night for him after his wife died, and when he had to wake up in the morning and find she was not by his side, but in the cold churchyard outside the window. It was a long and bitter struggle to rear those two poor children without any money at all; but the man won. People generally — lords, squires, magistrates, farmers—began to be aware of a pale, handsome, and very poor man, with twice the brains and three times the debating power of any of them, who went up and down their little world, not *pleading* for the poor, but *ordering* that the law of the land should be put in force in their favour.

The poor, as a matter of course, took to him at once; the farmers were longer in winning, for they said that he made mischief, as he certainly did. But one day at the market dinner farmer Willesden, his chief opponent at first, saw that although he had often 'caught it' from Mr. Mordaunt, yet he always, somehow, found Mr. Mordaunt in the right; and, that Mr. Mordaunt was as game to stand between landlord and tenant as he was to stand between farmer and labourer. In short, Mr. Mordaunt had won the respect of the farmers; and such is the bull-headed persistency of those gentlemen, that if you once gain their confidence you must be an utter fool to lose it again.

When he first came into the parish the lord of the manor, Lord Barnstaple, was very old, and was devoting the remainder of a very busy and well-spent life to politics; when he was not in his place in the House of Lords he was at Cannes. The Bishop was also very old and very cynical, having been throughout all his life a politician far more than an ecclesiastic, a writer of pamphlets more than a

preacher. The Rector of Sprowston was also infirm and quite unfit for his duties. Lord Barnstaple was a very strong Whig, and it was to his influence that the Bishop owed his position, while the infirm Rector was also a Whig and an old college friend of Lord Barnstaple's. What between whiggery and old age, not one of the three interfered in any way with Mr. Mordaunt; but time brought changes, and at the time when Mr. Mordaunt had got everybody with him the old Rector died. He sent for Mr. Mordaunt on his death-bed, and urged him to persevere in his present course as long as he lived.

'I have wasted my life in politics, Mordaunt,' he said, 'or I would have done what you are doing. I earnestly beg of you to persevere. Remember my words, and don't give up. One of the reasons why I am loth to die even now, is, that you have got a worthless man and tyrant coming. I could not stop it; Lord Barnstaple wishes to be rid of the man, and make him hold his tongue; so he has shelved him here. I have extorted a promise from Lord Barnstaple that you are not to be removed, save at your own wish—that is all which I could do. Be as wise as a serpent, and as harmless as a dove. Good-bye, my dear Mordaunt: I wish I was young again, and able to stand beside you. You will find that I have left you my private sacramental plate; take it as an earnest of what might have been if I had been younger. Good-bye.'

So the good old fellow died, and the Rev. L. Easy reigned in his stead. Mr. Easy was the greatest of all bear leaders of ancient or modern times: for winking at or ignoring vice among rich young men he was a Petro-

nus Arbiter: in expanding on the virtues of a protecting family he was a Horace. The worst of it was that he was a dunce, and when the pestilent system of competitive examination came in it was discovered that, although the famous Letmedown Easy could still conceal or palliate the vices of his pupils, he was utterly unable to get them through their examinations. He found his old trade going from under his feet and into the hands of honest men; he had saved money, but it would never pay him to invest in the employment of coaches; he was as nearly as possible retiring from the trade when a job fell into his hands which enabled him to retire with honour. The second son of Lord Barnstaple was requested to retire from Eton without further delay, and did so retire.

Lord Barnstaple was at Cannes when he heard of this terrible blow; but he wrote to the bishop, and the bishop, then very infirm, wrote that Easy was always the man in these cases. Lord Barnstaple sent Lord Edward Hemling to Mr. Easy with a letter in which certain contingencies were mentioned if the lad could be got through his examination for the army. It has been said that the old nobleman promised him a thousand pounds and his next living; and it has also been said that when Lord Edward Hemling arrived, and was examined by the Rev. Mr. Easy, that the rev. gentleman scratched his head and told his wife that he did not half like the job. Encouraged by her, however, she being ten times more unscrupulous than himself, he undertook the matter. Then follows a very odd and dark story. A young man, a printer, was sentenced to six months' hard labour for stealing some papers two days

before the examination. Duplicate proofs were taken, and only one set were found on the young man (now married and conducting a flourishing printing business in Ontario); as to what had become of the other set the young man was most discreetly silent, and he did his six months with a joyous alacrity which won him the good opinion of every official in Coldbath Fields. In the meantime Lord Edward had passed his examination, and had joined a regiment of the foot guards, and after three months was requested to exchange for being drunk at mess. A meeting of the Guards' Club unanimously expelled him, and he shortly afterwards joined a West India regiment on the west coast of Africa; and in spite of all that his hard-worked brother officers could do for him by advice and assistance, he died of drink and fever.

Still Mr. Easy had fulfilled his bargain with Lord Barnstaple, and Lord Barnstaple was not a man who forgot. On the rector's death Mr. Easy came into the living of Sprowston, and all the Lord Barnstaples in the world could not put him out of it. Besides, he knew things about Lord Edward which it was impossible to talk about in society, but about which there was nothing to prevent his talking now that he had got everything he could possibly get; he had, therefore, the whip hand of Lord Barnstaple, and, having been a rogue all his life, he would not scruple to use it if it suited his purpose. The only thing which kept Mr. Mordaunt's house over his head was this.

Lord Bideford, the eldest son of Lord Barnstaple, was a very different man to his brother Lord Edward. He was by another mother. Lord Barnstaple had married, first, Lady Alice Barty, the beauty of



a family which has given us some of our best statesmen, and by her he had Lord Bideford. A long time after her death his lordship made a most imprudent marriage, and the loss which is said about that the better; the offspring of this marriage was Lord Edward. Lord Bideford was a very silent young man, and no one seemed to know anything about him, save that he had taken a 'first' at Oxford, and was very silent in Parliament. Now, in the course of nature, Lord Bideford would soon be Lord Barnstaple and master of Crowshoe. Mrs. Easy, who was fond of dress and show, was very anxious to have the *entrée* of that castle; and, as some rumours had reached her as to the fact that the young lord was not only very silent but very obstinate, she urged on her husband that it would be very impolitic to take ultimate measures with regard to Mr. Mordaunt until they had gathered the opinions of Lord Bideford. Meanwhile she quite agreed to the plan of leading him the life of a dog, and making his resignation his own act: they could get a young man cheaper by sixty pounds, and that would enable her to go to London every year.

Mr. Mordaunt was a very mild High Churchman, and had introduced some extremely mild alterations in the church service, after a long consultation with the farmers; who, being every one of them Conservatives, gladly acquiesced in what he did when he pointed out to them that he was simply carrying out the directions of the Prayer-book, on which they pinned their faith. He shortened the services individually, although the actual length of them was greater than ever. He had a communion at eight o'clock every Sunday morning, which was well attended; and, in fact, did quietly and ex-

actly what the Prayer-book told him to do. He made also, on the other hand, great friends with the dissenting minister (Wesleyan), and they had hot arguments in their walks as to what John Wesley would say if he knew that his followers had seceded from the establishment after his death. Then an Irish harvestman fell ill in his parish; and when Mr. Mordaunt found that he was a Roman Catholic, he borrowed farmer Willesden's horse and gig, drove to the nearest town where there was a Roman Catholic priest, and fetched him over in triumph in broad daylight, and insisted on his staying all night, asking one or two of the farmers, and his friend the dissenting minister, to meet him in the evening. The evening passed off in the most charming manner; though the Wesleyan minister afterwards told Mr. Mordaunt that he was vexed at not being able to hold his own in learning, with the man of the Establishment, or the Romanist. Farmer Willesden was so taken with the Romanist, that he sent him a pair of spring chickens on Good Friday, in all innocence, thinking that it would be a delicate attention, under the impression that Good Friday was the great holiday of the Romish church.

Now all these lapsarian backslidings from grace were very soon told to the Rev. Letmedown Easy, by the admiring farmers. That they were abominable and audacious no one could deny; the question was, how to utilize them with Lord Bideford, and procure the removal of Mr. Mordaunt without shutting up Crowshoe Castle? They could save sixty pounds a year by getting rid of Mr. Mordaunt.

The first question with this worthy pair was this: what was Lord Bideford? Lord Barnstaple

was a shining light among the evangelicals, and it was notorious that his brother-in-law had practically appointed the last five bishops. He was too old to be taken into the calculations, however; and the question was, what were Lord Bideford's religious opinions? It was a very difficult question to answer. Lord Bideford certainly attended, with great diligence and regularity, the afternoon service at All Saints, Margaret Street; but he was also to be seen at Vere Street listening to Mr. Maurice, and he frequently preached at Field Lane: a most tiresome and puzzling young man! But Field Lane and his preaching there did the business. He might listen to Maconochie, Stopford Brooke—to any one, in short; but the fact of his preaching under the presidency of Lord Shaftesbury settled the question: the man was an evangelical, like his father.

Consequently the Rev. Letmedown Easy became violently evangelical, according to his view of evangelicalism. The leader of that party in the church remonstrated with him in an angry manner about what he did, and went so far as to tell him that he was persecuting a better man than himself. But Lord Bideford was silent; and so Mr. Easy saw Crowshoe Castle open to him.

However, the principal thing in hand was to force Mr. Mordaunt to resign. He began with the farmers, trying to undermine his influence with them. They at once burnt him in effigy on the village green, and, assisted by their hinds, howled outside his house so long, that Mr. Easy fled to the cellar for refuge. He failed with the farmers; but he had farmer Willesden up at petty sessions for language likely to provoke a breach of the peace. The chairman fined Willesden five

shillings, and he put two pounds in the poor-box. Willesden, meeting Mr. Easy outside the court, repeated the language, I regret to say, with adjectives. The chairman, Sir Pitchcroft Cockpole, said to Mr. Easy, afterwards, 'You had better leave that man Mordaunt alone. He has been master here for a few years, and he is likely to remain master.'

Mr. Easy's hands were, however, considerably strengthened by a new archdeacon, a man by no means of the 'Grantly' type of archdeacon. He and Easy had more than once played into one another's hands, it was said, though that was extremely improbable, for the Archdeacon was one of the most cautious men in creation, and had only lost a bishopric by slightly ratting at the wrong time. He was a kinsman of Easy's, and was not best pleased at finding his kinsman there, for the ugly old story about Lord Edward's examination papers was still spoken of, and, like all untruths, was believed in. Two courses only were open to the Archdeacon, either to throw his kinsman overboard, or to back him up through thick and thin. After due thought, he chose the latter.

What induced Mr. Mordaunt just at this time to preach a sermon before his new rector, airing his views as regarded the spiritual sovereignty of the Queen, no man can tell. It is enough that he did it, and that Mr. Easy requested him to hand over the original MS. in the vestry for immediate conveyance to the old Bishop. The old man read it in bed while Mr. Easy was taking lunch, and then called Mr. Easy to his bedside.

'This is a curious sermon, Mr. Easy,' said the Bishop; 'and Mr. Mordaunt is a very curious man; but you had much better make friends with him than quarrel

with him. You will never get on in that parish if you do.'

Mr. Easy thought differently, and put every possible annoyance he could in Mr. Mordaunt's way, until that gentleman began to think of giving up the whole thing and emigrating. Two changes happened, however, which made him hang on—Lord Barnstaple and the old Bishop died within one week.

The new Bishop was an old friend of his, and when he went to the palace received him with open arms. On the occasion of his first visit Mr. Mordaunt said nothing at all about his troubles. Mr. Easy, however, saved him that trouble by stating his case to the new, young, and vigorous bishop without delay. The new Bishop heard them with the greatest patience and attention, and afterwards said, 'I cannot see myself that there is any case against him. You say that his continuation there is scandalous. As the French say, "*Voulez vous préciser votre accusation.*"'

That was very difficult, Mr. Easy said, after a few moments. 'He associates with the farmers.'

'That is very good,' said the Bishop. 'That is an old habit of my own.'

'His son takes work in the fields, and takes money for it.'

'Sooner than loaf, cheat, or beg,' said the Bishop. 'I am sorry that the son of an educated gentleman like Mordaunt should be brought so low; but the early Christians did that same thing. St. Paul was only a tent-maker, you know, Mr. Easy. Is there anything against the young man's character? Is he the sort of young man who would have come in your way in your former line of business, Mr. Easy?'

Mr. Easy, devoutly wishing the Bishop somewhere, replied that

there was nothing against the young man in a moral point of view.'

'Well,' said the Bishop; 'it is a most disgraceful scandal. Here is a man like Mordaunt, a man worth twenty such men as you or I, Mr. Easy, obliged to send his son into the harvest-field for a living. It is the most shameful thing I ever heard of.'

So the Archdeacon and Mr. Easy took very little by their motion. Mr. Mordaunt came over to the Bishop by summons, and spent the day with him. They talked over many old matters, and at the end Mr. Mordaunt asked the Bishop what he knew about the new Lord Barnstaple.

'Exactly nothing,' said the Bishop. 'I think that he is a terrible prig, and will probably assist Easy, who saved his half-brother from disgrace, and who was a nominee of Barnstaple's father. Meanwhile, go home, old friend, commit no indiscretions, and hold your own.'

Things were exactly in this state when Mr. Mordaunt received the intimation of Lord Barnstaple's visit. He was very anxious about that visit, and, as we have seen before, walked away to his old friend, the Bishop, to consult him. The Bishop made him stay all night, and all the next day, and the next night. The Dean and the Precentor, cunning men when there was a kindly, Christian act to be done, begged of him, as a personal favour, to stay over the day and intone for the Precentor, who had a convenient cough. Mr. Mordaunt could intone with the best of them, and so he spent a whole happy day under the glorious old arches, doing service after service.

'I feel young again, Bishop,' he said at night, when they were going to bed; 'I will sing matins and go home.'

And after matins away he went walking, and thinking what preparations Alice had been making for Lord Barnstaple, but not much caring, for the cathedral music was in his ears, and so he sang all the way.

He arrived in the afternoon, and, opening his own door, passed into the parlour. His daughter Alice was standing beside the chimney-piece, and with her was a tall and strong man, whom he knew well, the inspector of police.

Alice was ghastly pale, and was moistening her dry lips with her tongue.

'Papa,' she said, 'here is Inspector Morton, who has been waiting for you.'

Mr. Mordaunt saw that something was very wrong, and he left off humming a Gregorian chant to say, 'How do, Morton? Come after me? I don't think you gentlemen practise in the ecclesiastical courts. You will have to take me in execution for unpaid costs in the ecclesiastical court some day, but my time is not come yet.'

'Papa,' said Alice, 'don't joke; it is Charles.'

'What has he been doing?' said Mr. Mordaunt.

'Oh, father, don't break down; he is arrested for burglary!'

'Charles arrested for burglary!' exclaimed Mr. Mordaunt, laughing. 'No: this is very good—this is as good as a play. Easy will make something of this. Leave the room, old girl, and let me talk to the inspector.'

'What is this story, inspector?' said Mr. Mordaunt, when his daughter was gone.

'Well, sir, I am sorry to tell you that Mr. Charles is in custody for attempted burglary at Barnstaple.'

'But that is forty miles away,' said Mr. Mordaunt, 'and the whole thing is ridiculous.'

'It looks so, sir; but he was watched into a door, and then out of the same door two hours after, and was captured.'

'But, my good inspector, this is perfect midsummer madness. My son is incapable of such an act.'

The inspector came close to Mr. Mordaunt and whispered in his ear. As he whispered to him Mr. Mordaunt's face grew more and more ashy pale, and at last he begged him to desist, and staggered to a chair.

After a few minutes he raised his ghastly face to the inspector's, and said, 'I would sooner that it had been burglary than that.'

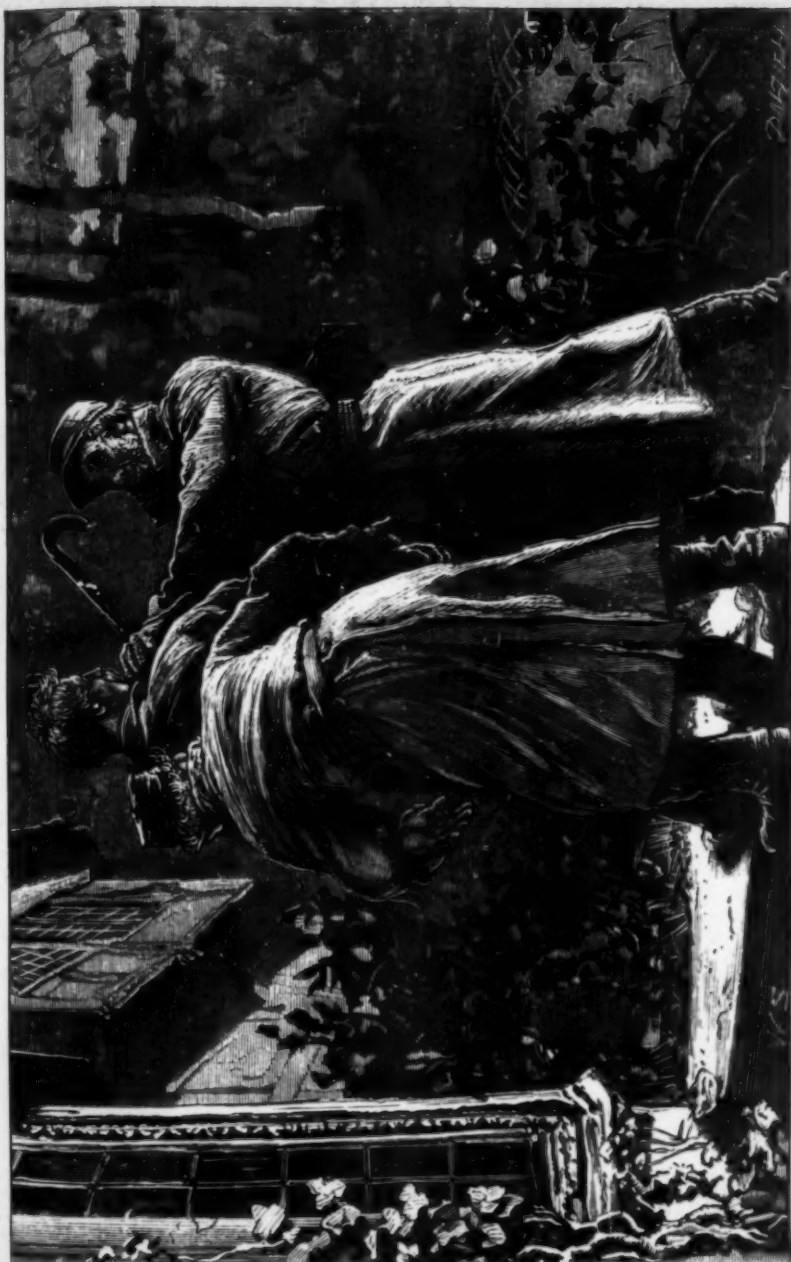
'No doubt, sir,' said the inspector; 'we know your principles about here, and we know Mr. Charles's principles also. There ain't two men more loved in these parts than you two. But you have not heard me out, sir. That Inspector Bryan is a fool, sir. I was over to Barum yesterday, and I went and see Master Charles, and he give me the office, and I went and got this.'

There came a flush into Mr. Mordaunt's pale face as he looked at the little paper which I have noticed in the face of more than one middle-aged man. The lordly and imperial look of the young bridegroom is not more lordly than the look of the young grandfather. Mordaunt held his head higher than he had ever done since he led his bride out of church three-and-twenty years ago. What was Easy to him now? what was the Archdeacon? In his new pride they might go hang themselves.

'Now how did all this come out, inspector?' said he.

'That is as you think, sir,' said the inspector.

'We must not leave her in a false position,' said Mr. Mordaunt.



Drawn by W. Small.]

### AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF CHARLES MORDAUNT.

'He was caught trying to see her, and would have been taken up for burglary, if Tom and his Aunt had not made it all right.'—See Page 8.

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'Certainly not,' said the inspector.

'I will step round to the old man first, and tell him the truth,' said Mr. Mordaunt. And the inspector departed. Mr. Mordaunt went up to his daughter's room, and found her crying in bed. 'Alice,' he said, 'you must listen to me.'

'About Charles?'

'Yes, about Charles. Charles has been married for two months, without my knowledge.'

'To Mary Willesden?'

'To the same young lady. I suppose he has done very wrong, but that is a matter of detail. He was caught trying to see her, but I will go over and make it all right for him to-morrow.'

'I knew he loved her, father; but I did not think of this. Our Charles is an honest man, and we can hold up our heads before fifty Lord Barnstaples when he comes.'

Mr. Mordaunt went round to farmer Willesden's at once, and after a somewhat difficult interview the farmer agreed to go to Barum the next morning, to scold Charles, and to bail him out. They went, but Charles had been discharged five hours previously, and was gone no one knew whither.

The next day came the following letter from Charles:—

'MY DEAR FATHER—

'I greatly regret that I have deceived you for the first time in my life; and I ought, I suppose, to regret that I cannot regret it.

'My life, was utterly unendurable. I had no opening, and no chance of any opening in the world. With the education of a gentleman I was leading the life of a clodhopper. Only one thing prevented me from enlisting in a dragoon regiment, and that was my love for Mary Willesden. She urged on me that I could never marry

her if I turned soldier. I was at one time actually desperate; I am so no longer, thanks to Tom Harvey.'

Mr. Mordaunt paused. 'Tom Harvey,' he thought, 'the miller's son. Why, Tom Harvey has got a mill in Canada.'

'He was,' the letter went on, 'Mary Willesden's cousin, as you know. He was a great friend of mine when we were boys together. He has done very well in Ontario, and is making his fortune. He came over here four months ago on commercial business, and I met him in Barnstaple.

'He asked me to come back with him to Canada; but I demurred about leaving Mary. He then began to urge on me the plan of marrying her secretly and telling of it afterwards. He said that it often occurred in Canada and in the United States, that a young man would marry a young woman, and leave her with her mother until he had got a home for her. At last I determined to do so; and one reason of my secrecy was, that I knew that you were in trouble with the Rector and the Archdeacon. We were married two months ago. Tom Harvey, whose time was out in England, returned from London to Barnstaple, and urged me more strongly than ever to come to Canada with him in a brig which is taking slates to Quebec. I consented; but of course I had to tell Mary. She arranged to let me in quietly, and I went in and stayed for two hours. As I came out, the police got hold of me, and I should have been tried for burglary if Tom Harvey and his aunt had not made it all right. Tom has paid my passage, and has lent me money. As for my darling wife, father, you and Alice must take care of her until I claim her. I regret to say that, if all goes well, you will find yourself a grandfather

before I return. Now I must have your forgiveness; and, with love to Alice, I say good-bye, and God bless you!

‘CHARLES MORDAUNT.’

Mr. Mordaunt and farmer Willesden had a long confabulation over this letter; and old Lady Ascot says that they had three pints of small ale and a vast number of pipes over it. If there is one quality more than another which adorns her ladyship, it is that of inexorable truth. I had the honour of asking her, at a grand party one night, whether she was quite sure that they only had three pints and not four. She replied that it was only three, and, as she drew the beer herself, she ought to know, and so I disputed the fact no longer.

‘Well, parson,’ said farmer Willesden, ‘so my daughter is married to a gentleman! Who’d have thought it?’

‘To a beggar, you mean, I think,’ said Mr. Mordaunt.

‘There ain’t nought of a beggar about *her*,’ said farmer Willesden, laughing. ‘How sly they was about it, pretty dears! Don’t you love ‘em, parson?’

‘I don’t quite understand about it, farmer,’ said Mr. Mordaunt. ‘I did not miss Mary, at all. Why was she at Barnstaple?’

‘Oh! why, she wanted to go there to be finished; and so I sent her.’

‘To be finished!’

‘Ah, at the boarding-school. And she stayed there long enough to make her marriage in Barum legal; and so they was asked there, and they was married there. Don’t e’e see?’

‘They have both deceived us sadly, farmer.’

‘What would you have ‘em do?’ cried the farmer. ‘When you made love to your poor lady that’s

gone, did you go and tell your mother?’

‘I certainly did not,’ said Mr. Mordaunt.

‘Then you deceived *her* sadly,’ said the farmer. ‘They all do it. If young folks mean to come together they’ll do it, and small blame to them. However, your son has behaved like an honourable and good young man to my daughter, which is more to the purpose.’

‘In marrying her, leaving ‘*her* on our hands, and running away to Canada!’ said Mr. Mordaunt, aghast.

‘Be sure,’ said the farmer. ‘He had not got money enough to keep her, and so he cut away to Canada to get some. Lord bless you! if ever fortune was writ in a man’s face it is writ in Charles’s!’

‘Do you know, Willesden,’ said Mr. Mordaunt, ‘that I think you are as great a fool as I am.’

Willesden grinned, but added, more seriously, ‘My girl must come away from that school. She had better come to her mother.’

‘No,’ said Mr. Mordaunt, ‘she *must* come to me. My boy has made, I think, a fool of himself; and her coming here, and our making all things public, will stop everyone’s mouth. Don’t you see?’

‘It won’t do you any good with the Rector and the Archdeacon,’ said the farmer, rather ruefully.

‘Never mind me. I am in trouble so hard with them that nothing can make it worse. Send her here to-morrow night. And so the farmer departed.

‘DEAR BISHOP—

‘My son has married one of my farmer’s daughters, and has gone to Canada to make a home for her. The boy is as innocent and as pure as you are. Please give every one the rights of the story.

‘JAMES MORDAUNT.’

'DEAR MORDAUNT—

'I will do as you desire, but take the young lady into your own house at once; that act will do more than all my words. Barnstaple is to be with you to-morrow. I cannot in any way make him out. What it is I cannot conceive. He is an awful prig, and silently dangerous. You must think of this: he may mean you well or ill; if he means you well he can do absolutely nothing for you, beyond bringing his influence to bear on that (here came an erasure). Easy to keep you in your place: if he mean you well he can still do nothing; he will not have a living dropping in these ten years, and he is in opposition, and so he cannot get you a Chancellor's living. The worst men I ever have to deal with are Cambridge Conservatives and Oxford Radicals. As a Cambridge man myself I naturally think an Oxford Radical the worst: he is one; mind him.'

'GEORGE CREDITON.'

Poor frightened Mary Mordaunt, *née* Willemsen, arrived at the home of her husband's father in a great state of trepidation and terror. But in a quarter of an hour she found that she was the most precious thing there. Poverty may be brutalizing to the extremely poor and unrefined; but one of the lessons we can learn from the French every day, if we choose to know them, is this,—that poverty among refined people has a most ennobling influence. Take that little knot of highly-educated paupers in Judea, eighteen hundred years ago, as an example. Mary, the pretty, innocent bride, found herself queen of the establishment. She was to sleep with Alice, and as they went upstairs together, Mr. Mordaunt said,

'He has gone to prepare a place for you, darling. Trust him, and

we shall all be together again soon in a happier land than this. See, pretty; I have twelve hundred pounds, which would be a fortune to him, and which I will freely give if he can establish himself. Why, we are wealthy people, my love. Now, leave crying; we shall be rich there.'

'I only cry, sir, because I am so happy,' said Mary; 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.'

However, none of these sentimentalities could put off the inexorable arrival of Lord Barnstaple, now delayed for two days, his lordship having had to make a speech at the county agricultural meeting, which was given in the 'Times' at full length, and which most carefully expressed nothing at all about the movements of the Opposition. Lord Barnstaple rode up to Mr. Mordaunt's door at half-past twelve, and, finding no groom, led his horse round to the stable, took off his bridle and put a halter on him, took off the saddle, and then came out to the pump with a bucket to get him a pail of water.

At this point Mr. Mordaunt caught him. 'My lord,' he said, 'I did not see you arrive. I am ashamed——'

'At what?' said Lord Barnstaple. 'At a man attending to his horse? "The merciful man is merciful to his beast," parson.'

'No, but I am ashamed that you should have had to see to your horse, when I would have done it,' said Mr. Mordaunt.

'The Church of England has got low enough without the spectacle of an ordained minister grooming a nobleman's horse.'

'You will have your own way, my lord.'

'I intend to,' said Lord Barnstaple, and then Mr. Mordaunt looked at him. Prig he might be,

according to our good Bishop's views, but a man he certainly was. A very noble looking young man, with a singularly set jaw, and a curious reticence of expression which puzzled Mr. Mordaunt extremely.

He brought Lord Barnstaple into the parlour, where there was some simple refreshment; there was no one there but poor Mary, who was curtsying. Mr. Mordaunt asked where Alice was, and she replied that Alice was gone away. She seemed in great trepidation at the sight of the great lord, and Mr. Mordaunt did really wish that Alice had been there to receive him. He presented Mary.

'My daughter, my lord.'

'I was not aware that you had two daughters, Mr. Mordaunt.'

'I ought to have said my daughter-in-law,' said Mr. Mordaunt. 'My dear son has made a romantic match, and has gone to Canada to make a home for his bride, leaving his pretty rosebud of a bride here with us.'

'Quite so,' said Lord Barnstaple. 'It must have required singular resolution to leave such a beautiful bride.'

'Ah! but he wanted to stay with her for many years, my lord, until his death, not for a poor foolish few, and then leave her in poverty. When you think of it, my lord, he has acted like a man and a gentleman.'

There was a brilliance in Lord Barnstaple's eyes when Mr. Mordaunt said this, which attracted that gentleman strangely. Lord Barnstaple only said,

'That is a very beautiful story. And you, my dear madam, you are contented to wait.'

'I think that he will send for me soon,' she said, quietly, 'for I know that he will as soon as he can. I was down to the sea the other day, and the sailors' wives

told me that their husbands were away three years together sometimes. But there are no more loving wives than sailor's wives. I can wait.'

The man whom the Bishop had called a prig, looked steadily at her, and Mr. Mordaunt saw a tear trickle down his face. Lord Barnstaple was himself in one moment, however.

'May I ask this young lady to retire while we talk business,' he said. 'We have secrets to talk of, which must be trusted to no ears but our own.' Mary hurriedly retired, and Lord Barnstaple with a bow opened the door for her, and shut it after her.

'Now, Mr. Mordaunt, as we are alone together, I will tell you what is the matter with you. You are horridly poor.'

'Yes, my lord.'

'And you are bullied out of your life by a rascal and a prig. The rascal is Easy, and the prig the Archdeacon.'

'I will not say a word against either of them,' said Mr. Mordaunt.

'No, but I know it. It is in our favour that the Archdeacon is not only a prig, but a flunkey: it is in our favour that the fellow Easy is not only a rogue, but a flunkey: by one bold stroke I can mend matters for you. I have not got a living to give you, and I can't get one for you at present; but I have no domestic chaplain. My father's domestic chaplain and I never agreed; he has a good living, and his chaplaincy lapsed with my father's death. I wish to appoint you my domestic chaplain, at the same salary, 250*l.* a year. At the same time there is no librarian at Crowshoe, and the books are in a devil of a state; you must really undertake them at a salary of 150*l.* a year. I can't give more, and if you think

that insufficient I'll tell you what we will do to end the thing in a friendly manner, and without a squabble. Let us both write to Piazzi at the British Museum, and see if he considers it enough. If he decides against me, of course I must pay extra.'

'My lord, God is very good to me.'

'He is good to all who seek Him,' said Lord Barnstaple, sentimentally. 'But don't you see, my dear soul, that the keys of Crow-shoe are in your hands, and that by this manœuvre we have entirely bowled out the adversary. I'd have given you a living fifty times over if I had one, but I want to keep you here, and I don't see any other way of doing it.'

'Why should you be so generous to me, my lord, whom you have never seen, and of whom you know nothing?'

'Know what?' said Lord Barnstaple, sharply.

'Nothing.'

'Don't I,' said his lordship. 'Now I'll go saddle my horse. I suppose your daughter Alice will not appear. Well, it is all equal to me, as the French say. She will have to see me some day. Talk about this matter, of your being appointed domestic chaplain and librarian, it will save you trouble. Tell the Bishop about it, he is a capital gossip, and tell him that if I am a prig, I am not the only one in the world.'

And so he saddled the horse and rode away, leaving Mr. Mordaunt dazed, but almost directly afterwards he rode back again, jumped off his horse, and laid his hand on Mr. Mordaunt's shoulder. 'I forgot one thing,' he said. 'You are not ashamed of being poor. I brought fifty pounds in notes for you in advance of your salary. Here it is, God bless you, good-bye,' and so he was off at last.

So Mr. Mordaunt stood there a rich man—rich beyond his utmost expectations; and all by the sudden act of a young nobleman, who was a prig. He had no hesitation in accepting the whole matter any more than he would have rebelled to God about a thunderstorm which had knocked his chimneys about his ears. One ecclesiastical instinct was always in his mind, and he acted on it. He wrote to his bishop: the Archdeacon said once, 'that if his cat had died he would have walked over and told the bishop.'

His mind being eased in that way, he went to look for Alice; but Alice was nowhere to be found. She must be at some of the neighbours' houses: she had been frightened by Lord Barnstaple, and was keeping out of the way. At ten o'clock he went to bed; at eleven he was awakened by a candle in his eyes, and the figure of Alice before him, who sat down on the bed.

'Father, what money have you?'

'A great deal. Fifty pounds.'

'Has Lord Barnstaple given you money?'

'I am to have four hundred a year from him.'

She sat thinking for a little, and then she said, 'I want forty pounds.'

'For what?'

'To go to Charles. To go to Canada.'

'Why?'

'Do not ask, unless you want me to fall dead at your feet. Save me! that is all I ask. Give me the money.'

A wild, dark suspicion formed itself in Mr. Mordaunt's head.

'This is Lord Barnstaple's money,' he said, coldly.

'Bless his money, and bless him for what he has done for you! He is a good man. But you must save



me, father. I must go to Charles. I am innocent! but I must go to Charles. Oh God!—father, do not hesitate!’

‘Can you tell me no more, sweetheart?’ said Mr. Mordaunt.

‘Not a word!—not a word!’ she said. ‘I will tell you all when I am in Canada—but I cannot now.’

‘Now look here, Alice, let us be in some way reasonable. You cannot go to Canada to-night, but you can go to bed. Wait till to-morrow, and we will talk it all over. If you are in trouble, which you will not tell about, what is easier than to do this: to sell out our twelve hundred pounds, and for you, and Mary and I all to go to Canada together? I can pay Lord Barnstaple back his fifty pounds, and we can all part friends, and join Charles.’

Then she began to cry, and then she told the whole truth.

She had been to an aunt’s house at Exeter a few months before, and she had been often out walking by herself, as very poor girls have to walk. Wombwell’s menagerie was there, and the tiger got out and crawled down towards the river. She saw the thing going along, and pointed it out to a gentleman, who raised the alarm, and made her acquaintance. He was a very nice and handsome gentleman, and begged to be allowed to call on her to see if she had recovered her fright. Her aunt—having inspected the gentleman on his first visit, and having seen that there was no harm in him—had allowed Mr. Mortimer’s visits with great complacency, more particularly after she had seen him in eager conversation with Lord Fortescue. The old lady knew that Lord Fortescue would allow no man to speak to him who was not an honest man; and Lord Fortescue was the only nobleman she knew by sight; and so Mr. Mortimer was allowed

to see as much of Alice as he chose; and he made love to Alice, and Alice was very deeply attached to him. But Mr. Mortimer never made any distinct proposal; and so, when Alice came home, she set her mind on forgetting Mr. Mortimer, but found that she could not in any way do so.

When Lord Barnstaple rode into the garden she was looking out of the window, and she saw at once that Mr. Mortimer and Lord Barnstaple were the same men. Lord Barnstaple had deceived her, and he was a false and untruthful man: he had as good as wooed her under a false name, and that she would never forgive. Yet she loved him, admired him, and, after all, respected him. All this she poured into her father’s ear as she lay on the bed beside him.

‘Yet you would have taken his money to fly from him.’

‘Yes,’ she said. ‘I would have taken it, because I know him to be honest, noble, and good. We could pay it back. Father! he wants to marry me—I have known that some time, though he never said so. As Mortimer, I would have married him, because—in spite of his deceit—I love him; but, as Lord Barnstaple, I will not see him again. See if I am not right. Look at Charles’s marriage, and ask me if I am to drag down a man whom I really love to that level? And look again, father, after what you have told me to-night, how should we stand if I were to marry him? You have taken money from him. Would not all your friends—even the Bishop—say that you had sold me? How would your name stand then? Your name is all that you have had these many years—would you lose that?’

‘We had better fly,’ said Mr. Mordaunt. ‘What loose cash have we?’



'Eight pounds.'

'Nothing owing?'

'Nothing.'

'Then, if you will get off the bed, I will get up: we will send this fifty pounds civilly to Lord Barnstaple. We will go to London, sell out the twelve hundred pounds, and we will all go to Canada together. If he wants you he can come there after you.'

So it happened the next morning when the pretty bride, Mary, was lying in her bed, Alice came to her and woke her, saying, 'You must get up and go down to your father and mother to say good-bye.'

'Why?' said simple Mary.

'Because we are going to Canada, to Charles,' said Alice; and as Mary put her arm round Alice's neck, they felt they were sisters.

Free at last. No more trouble with the Archdeacon, Mr. Easy, the farmers, nay, even with the Bishop, his dear friend. A new life was before him and he knew it. Haste and speed were necessary, and there must be but few farewells; all the people must learn their loss after he was gone.

It was early in the bright morning when he set out to see the Bishop; hours before Mr. Easy would leave his bed. The hinds were going to their labour, and one after another greeted him as he walked swiftly along. One very old man stopped him and asked him to sit on a heap of stones at the road side, which Mr. Mordaunt immediately did.

'Parson,' said the old man, 'I want you to tell me something. I want you to tell me about the New Jerusalem, on which you preached last Sunday. Is it in this world or in the next?'

'In both,' said Mr. Mordaunt, at once, 'for me it is in this world, for you in the next. I am going to it,

I believe, before dissolution, you must wait until you are dead. See George,' continued Mr. Mordaunt, 'I am going to be very rich just now, and you shall never go into the house.'

The old man nodded but said nothing: a humbug would have loaded Mr. Mordaunt with blessings, old George only nodded, yet I do not think that Mr. Mordaunt was any the worse for the silent blessings which followed him along the lonely road.

He burst in upon the Bishop, pushing past the footman before his name could be announced. 'I am off old fellow,' was the salutation which the serious young footman heard before he shut the door.

'Yes,' said the Bishop, 'and whither?'

'Canada—Ontario, after my boy.'

'Then the visit of Lord Barnstaple was not satisfactory?' said the Bishop.

'In a pecuniary way yes, in other ways no. Ask him, he will tell you the truth. I don't see my way to certain arrangements, and so I shall go to Canada and take my boy's bride with me.'

'And your daughter?'

'She goes also.'

'I don't quite understand,' said the Bishop, 'but you know best. Everything you do must be for the best. About the parish, are you going to leave it in Easy's hands?'

'Yes: it must be so. Even Paul sowed the seed, and left it to grow among the churches. Yes.'

'When do you go,' asked the Bishop.

'Now, instantly. Give me your blessing and send me,' and he knelt down at once.

'Let us pray for a little more light, Mordaunt,' said the Bishop, and they did so, but none came; then Mr. Mordaunt knelt and received the benediction, and passing

swiftly through the Bishop's domestics, was through the town, and was making the dust fly on the king's highway before the Bishop had made up his mind whether he should detain him or not.

Mr. Mordaunt met the Archdeacon on his cob, and he stopped him. 'Mr. Archdeacon,' he said, 'we have not been friends, and yet I have a favour to ask you.'

The Archdeacon, who *was* a gentleman, at once dismounted. 'Dear Mordaunt,' he said, 'was it all my fault?'

'No! no! All mine,' said Mr. Mordaunt. 'I am away to Canada, and shall never see you again. But use your influence with the farmers in my old parish, and see to my poor when I am away.'

And so he was gone, and the Archdeacon was left standing in the road beside his cob, in sight of his wondering groom, as Mr. Mordaunt sped away amid the dust. And the Archdeacon saw there and then that they had lost the best man in the whole diocese, and like an honest fellow as he was took the lesson to heart, and acted on it. There is no stouter champion of the agricultural poor in the land now than our Archdeacon.

Mr. Mordaunt met Mr. and Mrs. Easy in a pony carriage, and he stopped them. 'I am going away,' he said; 'going away for ever. Let us part friends, and see to my people when I am gone.'

Mrs. Easy (who always drove) whipped the pony and went on, and so Mordaunt went on to his own, and they drove to *their* place. At this Christmas time let us say, 'God forgive us all.'

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Christmas time in the western part of Ontario is a very pleasant time indeed. The snow is set

hard, and you can drive the most beautiful horses in sleighs from one house to another all the night through. Even in that paradise, however, there are drawbacks. You get no newspapers for a long time together in winter, while you get more wolves than you want.

In the extreme West, almost on the Old Buffalo tracks, was a Christmas party. Mr. Mordaunt, his son Charles, his son's wife, Mary, a baby of one year old, Alice Mordaunt, and some servants, Irish all, who were in a state of wonder and delight at the astounding wealth all around them. There was simply more than you could eat if you put your mind to it. Mr. Mordaunt had been away in the sleigh, late in the day preaching, and had just come home.

Denis was bedding up the horses, and Biddy was waiting for the word to put on the dinner. Some one was wanting; it was Father Moriarty.

'Divvle a sowl of the blessed cratur will be here this night!' said Biddy. 'And by the name of the ever-blessed Saint Patrick, hark to the wolves. The Mother of God shield the holy man!'

'He'll come,' said Mr. Mordaunt. 'I left him close by; don't be a fool, Biddy.'

'Sorra a one of me would be a fool, and me living in a heretic's house,' replied Biddy; 'but I'd like to be shrieved this blessed night, to pray the better in the morning for him that needs all our prayers.'

'What?' said Mr. Mordaunt.

'Just nothing,' said Biddy; 'hark to the wolves then. Whist, all of you, there's one blowing under the door now; give me the broom, Miss Mordaunt,' and Biddy with infinite nimbleness and dexterity dashed to the door, and as

nearly as possible hit the wolf over the head.

'Bad cess to the divvle,' she said; 'I nearly had him. And the blessed father out among them;' but before she had time to blow off the steam, the 'blessed father' opened the door again and walked in, saying,

'Peace upon this house and all in it, Mordaunt; this is the most splendid thing of modern times.'

'What is the most splendid thing in modern times, you Irish lunatic?' said Mr. Mordaunt.

'It is an English lunatic this time, my boy, and more power to his elbow. The devil helps heretics. Here is one of your young English lords, with his doctor, has started from the Pacific side and won his way across the Rocky Mountains. Only him and his doctor, and an Indian. We shall make something of you English yet if you attend to us.'

'It is impossible,' said Charles Mordaunt. 'I cannot believe it. No man could have done it.'

'It's true, nevertheless,' said the good Father, rather seriously. 'Some said he was a prig, and perhaps he is; some said he was a fool, and maybe he might. But to disprove their words he set a task before him such as no man ever undertook. He did not care for life, for they say that a young lady had cast away his love: of that I know nothing. He has won, however, and has done a thing which will never be forgotten.'

'Is he safe, Father,' cried Alice.

'Oh! yes, he is safe enough—and the doctor—a broth of a boy of divilment—and the Indian, the grinning brown faced nagur. They are all safe enough.'

'Where are they?' cried Alice.

'They were at the door just now, in the cold, among the wolves,' said Father Moriarty. 'But, maybe if they are kept

there much longer they will go on to another farm.'

Alice threw the door open, and fell fairly into Lord Barnstaple's arms. Father Moriarty kissed every one all round, beginning with Mr. Mordaunt and ending with the baby and the Indian. I have little more to tell; I fancy that the story has told itself by this time. But as a personal matter, I should very much have liked the Archdeacon, and Mr. Letmedown Easy, to have seen that Christmas party; it would have done the Archdeacon good. Mr. Easy is a hopeless person.

They kept it up, I beg of you: the Indian, under the laws of the state, was not allowed liquor, but the others (with the exception of the baby) had a moderate quantity of hot wine and water; and I believe that the deleterious herb tobacco was used to some extent. Lord Barnstaple and Alice sat side by side, and Lord Barnstaple sang a song (he could no more sing than your grandmother, but did his duty). Father Moriarty sang the 'Last Rose of Summer' very beautifully and well—and, then, who should sing but Mr. Mordaunt: he sang 'The Graves of a Household,' and very well, too. In short, in the whole of our good Queen's dominions there was not a pleasanter Christmas party than there was in that farm-house in Western Ontario that Christmas night: though the cold was an illimitable number of degrees below zero, and the wolves came and blew under the door as soon as Father Moriarty began singing.

Lord Barnstaple was married at Montreal by his father-in-law, Mr. Mordaunt; he returned to England and holds his present position, about which we need say nothing. Mr. Mordaunt never returned; he says that, with all its faults, Ontario is dearer to him

than any land in the world. He lives with his son Charles, who, if he had been here, might have been a third-rate clerk. I asked an old friend the other day what Mr. Mordaunt was like now? He said, 'A man swift and eager in doing good.'

Father Moriarty is in great trouble about the infallibility pronouncement. He will have nothing to do with it at all. But I think that Father Moriarty is a man who can take very good care of

himself in a free country. He knows as well as we do, that the first real freedom dates from Christianity, and that whatever Churches may have done with our Charter since then, our Charter remains indefeasible. Christianity means freedom; and so we may wish both Father Moriarty and Mr. Mordaunt many happy Christmases, even though the snow is piled high over the roof tree, and the wolves are smelling and blowing round the door.



BALL-ROOM SKETCHES, NO. I.—RIVAL CLAIMS—POSSESSION FINE-TEXTS OF THE LAW.

## THE WHITE PALFREY.

## A Christmas Legend.

NEVER was maiden wooed like Margaret,  
 The 'Pearl of Snowdon,'—so her lovers called  
 The damsel, and a thousand names beside,  
 Which love twines round the flower he worships till  
 He binds it to himself; and then farewell  
 To fancy's flights. Plain 'Meg' is good enough  
 For wedded Margarets; or 'Peg,' alas!  
 A peg to hang a heart on, it may be,  
 Yet a sad fall from music 'Margaret.'

Never was maiden wooed like Margaret.  
 So many were her lovers that 'twas said  
 Had those who died for her been piled in mass,  
 Another top like Snowdon's would have kissed  
 The bending skies. One after other went  
 His way, dismissed, until but two remained—  
 Two youths as obstinate as mules, resolved  
 Neither to yield one jot unto his fellow.

But human patience tires of such a strife;  
 And soon 'twas seen, by sundry sighs that spoke  
 In merry jests between the rival pair,  
 That one, at least, was near surrendering.

One day the lady spoke her constant mind.  
 She loved, she said, no man so passing well  
 To barter freedom for him. Best she loved  
 The airy heights of mountains fresh with dawn;  
 A hound with footstep like the wind, a steed  
 Milk-white as May to amble o'er the plains,  
 And bow the supple neck to meet her call,  
 And bear her far from silly lover's talk.

'Why, then,' cried Herbert, 'such a steed have I,  
 My little sister's once. When poor May died  
 I swore the creature should bear rein no more;  
 None save my cherished sister's sylph-like form  
 Should ever grace the milk-white 'Maythorn' steed.  
 Yet, since thou wilt not listen to my suit,  
 And I go forth, a smitten man through life,  
 Take thou my sister's palfrey, Margaret,  
 As a last grace to one thou canst not love.  
 Nay, look not on your lover—he, I see,  
 Has favour found. He will not say me nay.  
 I yield the field to him. He's generous;  
 He will not counsel you to hold from me  
 This one poor grace, the last I e'er shall ask.'

*The White Palfrey.*

Then Margaret fell to musing in her mind;  
And liking not the gift from one so tried,  
Sought out excuse to make refusal fair.

'There is,' she said, 'a fate about the steed.  
White palfreys ever have an evil name.  
I am not fearful; yet I well recall  
A legend of a palfrey like to this  
Which bore the dead, sweet May, whom well I loved.'

Sudden alarm now paled young Albert's cheek,  
As, looking on the brother of the dead,  
He hastily broke in: 'Keep, keep the steed;  
Keep it in memory of a young hope dead.  
Lost May, your sister, she who loved it, died.  
Margaret, whom too you love, loves too the steed.  
Keep it in memory of the dead and lost.'

Then Herbert laughed, but on the tearful side.  
'I know the legend well,' he said. 'A witch  
It was who took the palfrey's form, and bore  
A bride in beauty up the mountain's side.  
There, like a speck—a star—a moment showed,  
The crowning glory of old Snowdon's peak,  
Till, on an instant lost to sight, the bride  
And milk-white palfrey vanished like a dream.  
A fitting tale to speed the Christmas hours,  
Unworthy all to weigh with Margaret.  
Margaret, the palfrey must be yours. Whate'er  
You will to do with it, that do, lost love:  
But take at least this one gift from my hand.'

So Margaret, not to pain a noble heart—  
A right sound loyal heart—took from his hand  
The fatal 'Maythorn' by the gilded rein.

\* \* \* \* \*

'Twas on a morn of Christmas, crisp with dew,  
When dews have hardened 'neath the Ice-king's stroke,  
And, loosed by the wind's breath, fall rustling splints  
From all the boughs that glitter in the sun.  
Albert and Margaret were mounted both,  
She on the lost May's palfrey, white 'Maythorn.'  
It was her first day's trial of the steed,  
And Albert looked with rueful visage on  
The creature's pettish pawing of the ground  
And tossing of the rein with lifted head.

Smiled Margaret on her lover through the tear  
That rose for May. 'My own beloved,' she said  
(They were to wed upon the close new year),  
'The time is hallowed as our love is hallowed.  
No evil spirit, it is said, walks forth  
On this blest day: what mischief, then, should fall?  
Yet since your fear is real, and no sprite—



A pressing incubus of pain to you—  
Either I will forego this Christmas ride,  
Or you shall bear the sacred mistletoe,  
Whose power can scare all evil fate away.  
Come, come, the mistletoe will serve our need.  
See! here I pluck it from a dead bough down.'

The phrase was ominous, and wished unsaid  
As soon as uttered. But the smile had won.  
Brave Albert took the sprig, and fixed it firm  
Within the collar of his hunting vest.  
And fair the two went forth, like youth and hope;  
Soon to be parted, too, like hope and youth.

The winds were out, like hounds at fullest cry;  
The dead trees lifted up their arms, dismayed;  
And shifting clouds rode up the sky, till seemed  
The quivering sun, like to a light blown out.  
Great Snowdon seemed to call them from his heights  
To come and stand above the winds of morn,  
And watch the wild world rocking at his feet,  
As swayed the cedars with a swoop and fall,  
Like giant eagles dropped to earth for prey.

Along the mountain-side the two pressed on,  
Margaret's white feather shedding silvery down  
Along the horse-path. Soon the fatal wind,  
Whirling in eddies, caught the loose-flung folds  
Of the long trailing riding-garb she wore.  
Like flapping sails that beat upon a mast  
White-lifted o'er the seas, the flying folds  
Beat round her limbs, and struck the mettled sides  
Of that white palfrey, long unused to bear  
Such airy freight of beauty. Up the side  
Of the huge mountain, swift in mad career,  
Started the palfrey. Up, too, spurred, all pale,  
The bridegroom Albert, mad in eager chase  
Of that fair 'Pearl of Snowdon,' soon to set  
Its beauty on the crown of yon great king  
Of mountains, thence to roll, like some soft tear  
Dropped from heaven's face, and melt, perchance, to earth.

Oh, strife of Love with Death! Oh, mighty heart  
That beats against the barriers of this world,  
Away upon the wild winds mount and go,  
And win your love from loss—your bride from death!

She turned and looked a silent, scared farewell  
On that pale hunter following in her track.  
The courage-giving smile he paid her back  
Kept her still seated, clinging to the steed.  
Onward he lashed until his spurs grew red,  
And the galled bay he rode, with sudden plunge,  
Leaped to the rescue.

*The White Palfrey.*

Neck and neck they go  
For one brief instant. Then with sudden snatch  
He plucks her from her saddle to his breast;  
Next curbs with sudden hand his jaded bay.  
Down roll the three to earth, bridegroom, and steed,  
And fainting prey of beauty, torn from death.

The dying bay gave one great gasp—and died.  
But rising woundless from his perilous fall,  
The lover to his quick heart clasped the bride,  
And let the world swim round. There, resting prone  
Upon the kindly sward, the pair beheld  
The flying mischief dart its onward way  
Even to the topmost brink of Snowdon's range.

A moment 'gainst the sky a flying mane  
Streamed o'er the cloudlands like a streaming cloud.  
Then vanished like a sun-departed mist,  
When morn, late tearful on the heights with dew,  
Turns to the sun's first kiss.

Still, from that day,  
When angry winds have roughed the clouds far o'er  
The peaks of Snowdon, and the flying drift  
Of scattered vapour streaks the open blue  
Of ether on a sun-blown Christmas morn,  
The wedded lovers mark the streaming cloud,  
And see the flying steed that flying once  
Flew in death's face, and live that morn anew.  
And never more the beauty of the hills  
Took rein along the fearful mountain side;  
But, seated low in happy motherhood,  
On the unshaded sward at set of sun,  
Told to her children tales of Christmastides,  
And happy homes, and fireside gatherings;  
But on the Palfrey Legend she was mute.

E. L. H.



## SOCIETY.

## AN AFTER-DINNER CONVERSATION.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE 'HARVEST OF A QUIET EYE,' &amp;c.

A CERTAIN couplet in Tennyson's 'Miller's Daughter' has always taken my fancy vastly, as suggestive of exceeding geniality and cosiness, and as chiming in with my own propensities and habits; it is this:—

'In after-dinner talk  
Across the walnuts and the wine.'

To my idea, this time is certainly the best time of all for a pleasant, genial, animated talk. Some men (especially if smokers) might put in a claim for a later hour. Let the tea have disappeared, they would say; let the piano have been closed, and the row of servants have filed out from family prayers; let the group of candlesticks in the hall have diminished, by the number of the girls; and, last, let Paterfamilias have selected his peculiar electro-plated, have made his final trot, with a small collection of books under his arm, into his study, and, having delivered a last parting admonition against sitting up late, have creaked up the stairs to bed. And then let us rub our hands in prospective glee; collar the lamp, descend the stairs, pile logs on the wide kitchen fire, draw chairs and settle about it, select cigars from proffered cases, load and ram down every variety of pipe—and talk from eleven till two!

I grant that there is much to be said for this time, and I—though no smoker—have enjoyed such subterranean talks, and so am, in a measure, tolerably impartial. And I still say, give me the after-dinner hour (my wife, looking over this, remarks, '*Because you men are alone, and can*

*have all the talk to yourselves*'). But, no. The discussion shall begin, in scattered guerilla shots, at dinner-time, skirmishing parties shall close, now and then, at dessert, while the ladies remain; and then, when the last white skirt has floated through the open door, we draw in all our forces, and the engagement begins in earnest. The evening is warm, and the window open, and there is an unnoticed, but felt, background to our talk, of moving leaves, and flecked sky, and twittering birds. A moderate sip of Madeira now and then gives us something, besides talking, to do: you trifle with a few strawberries, or open a peach, as the case may be, while the Herminius and Mamilius of the evening are at it.

It is very desirable that the disputants should have the power of keeping their temper, even while arguing with considerable vehemence, and some excitement. But if they do wax a little over-warm, it is one advantage of the after-dinner hour that an iron destiny is bringing on tea, and that the host will certainly rise, but a little sooner or a little later, and bring the debate to an end. And then there are the said tea, and the softening, genial influence of ladies, and the calming power of music, to restore the mind to its equable tone. Here, I think, is one decided advantage of my hour over the night assemblage, whose discussions, however over-vehement, may be indefinitely prolonged.

I like a talk after dinner, with men about my equals in age, station, experience. I would rather not be the only young man among

a senate of ancients, nor the only curate among a company of rectors. I like to be able to give and take, freely, and without restraint, or necessity of neither speaking nor being spoken to except with a kind of deferential protest. *Apropos* of this, I have been always charmed with the story of the two neighbours, who, though always capital friends, disagreed on almost every point, and never met without a desperate quarrel in argument. At last, one lent the other money, and, alas! henceforth all the fun was gone! All the carbonic acid gas had left the ale of their talk, and it was never drawn otherwise than quiet, tame, and flat; and dwindled, indeed, into the very smallest beer. The obliged man always, now, deferred and agreed, until, at last, his friend, driven frantic, cried out in a heat, '*Either contradict me, or pay me!*' And, for myself, I own that I do like to be able civilly, but positively, to contradict a friend.

These after-dinner talks are, I find (to specify one advantage), almost the best clerical meetings, when, that is, the company consists only or chiefly of clergymen. For unless it be kept strictly to a few quite intimate friends, the regular clerical meeting is apt to be formal and somewhat staid; degenerating, if the number be large, into a regular series of speech-making, in which the few join, and the more part remain silent; in which, at any rate, a certain order or rule of speaking must be kept. Now, I contend, it is hateful to be tied down to this speaking once for all in your turn. In talk—

'Thought leaps out to wed with thought,'

and you want to interrupt, to put in your say, just when it is appropriate. Your flint gave out a spark, at the minute, which you cannot

keep alight nor reproduce when the occasion has passed. And the surging, swaying stream of words soon passes by the point at which you stood, and inexorably closes the opening at which you would have slipped in. It is bad enough when there are no external fetters, to have to sit with some word a tiptoe on your lips that you are quite feverish to let loose; bad enough to make false start after false start, and to watch, at last, the talk roll by to some other point; and to be obliged, in silent mortification, to have to swallow the good thing which has now, you perceive, become out of date.

For spark kindles spark, and talk begets talk; and it is one of the advantages of my hour that even the reserved, the apathetic, and the silent have, by the time of its arrival, been subject to the unbending influence of the genial converse, and society, and fare, which made part of the preceding dinner, and are rendered sufficiently susceptible to the excitement of the interchange of thrust and fence, to have no choice but to catch up a foil, and slip now and then into the *melee*. Even the apathetic and commonplace are thus wrought upon; and for the good thinkers, and talkers, why, that preparatory mixing with their kind, male and female (both elements are valuable, if not indispensable, in this preparatory stage), has flowed over the plate of their perception, leaving it exquisitely sensitive to the least gleam of meaning, or shade of thought, or twig or leaf of expression in the views and subjects that are successively placed before the camera of the mind. Talk is nothing, if you may not say *what* you like, *when* you like—consistently, I need not add, with decency and civility. For—

'If thou be master-gunner, spend not all  
That thou canst speak, at once; but  
    husband it,  
And give men turns of speech. Do  
    not forestall,  
By lavishness, thine own and others'  
    wit,  
As if thou mad'st thy will. A civil  
    guest  
Will no more talk all, than eat all the  
    feast.'

However, I must own, I give rather the preference for pleasure, if not for profit, too, to meetings that are not wholly clerical. I like a lay element; I like to get other points of view than my own. And it has been well-observed, by a deep thinker, and able speaker (whose voice comes to us now from the other side of a broad River), that we clergy are apt to get into the way of looking at things only from our own standing-point. We are in danger, if we mix only with one another, of becoming narrow-minded, of not making allowance for—perhaps, of being incapacitated from being able to understand the different appearance which the same object presents to other men, from their other points of view—the lawyer's standing-point, the merchant's, the soldier's. Whereas we ought to compare and to correct mutually, and so all would get a wider, larger, view of things. This applies, in a degree, to all, but especially, I think, to those whose very profession and work confine them mainly to one sphere, and who are also much in their study, with their books. Therefore I like some intelligent, reverent-minded, large-hearted laymen to be of our company; and I do not want them always to agree with me; I like to hear the grounds of their disagreement, and, by the comparison of talk, to get to see how far mutual modifications and explanations will set us at one; and, if not, where we stop short,

and why we differ. And certainly, be it remarked, you will lose all the benefit of talk, if your endeavour in it be only to conquer in argument, to prove yourself right, and not to find out with whom really lies the truth:—

'Mark what another says; for many  
    are  
Full of themselves, and answer their  
    own notion.  
Take all into thee; then, with equal  
    care,  
Balance each dram of reason, like a  
    potion.  
If truth be with thy friend, be with  
    them both;  
Share in the conquest, and confess a  
    truth.'

I mean to set down what I can recollect, of such a talk as these of which I speak, held on an autumn evening last year. Such talks are no new things: they have been often held, and often admirably written down, still this mode of airing a subject is, I take it, still open to new comers; and it shall not be called plagiarism merely to claim a share in the use of a vehicle of expression the most common and natural to all. My living conversations, at my little cure, do not provoke or invite comparisons with the after-dinner talk at the Squire's. So neither shall comparisons with other conversations, be thought necessary, because the fancy takes me to embalm one of these interchanges of thought, and to seek for them a shelf in the growing pyramid of this magazine.

The season, then, is Autumn; the time, after dinner. The window is open, the table is round, the party is small. The ladies have cast a momentary gloom (this will set me right with them) by their departure. Still, I pass over to my wife's place; or, stay, I remember, on that evening we vacate the dinner-table in favour of a bow-window, and place the

Madeira on an oval table in the recess; and, four in number, settle ourselves down, and thus proceed with the discussion in progress. The broad quiet Wye winds underneath; beyond it, slope up depths of wheat, flushed with that intense gold that only lasts about a week, and closed in with the peculiarly crude dark green that—partly by contrast, partly from the complete maturity, at this time, of the leaves—the hedges, and trees now wear. Besides the gold wheat-fields, there spread out sheets of white barley, and pale pasture land, and fields tinged with the faint purple of the second crop of clover. Half the wheat in the nearest field stands in sheaves; the barley lies in prostrate rows, in one not far away; there is a cart heaped with corn, and patient horses, and busy men about it. The low of cattle, the thud of the ferry-boat, the caw of gathering rooks, and the cheery, calm, unobtrusive, though interrupted song of the robin, are the sounds which make a background, more quiet than silence would be, for our talk. Great trees edge the river; a mansion rises above them, opposite, a little to the right; and I can just see the spire of my church, beyond them, a mile away.

I give the scene, partly to please myself; partly because, insensibly, the expression of our thought is moulded and influenced by the objects which surround it. I think that there would have been a difference, hardly perceptible very likely, but real, in the very tone of our thoughts and its expression, had our conversation taken place, say, in a London dining-room, in one of a row of tall dingy houses, in a quiet street, with a prospect of nothing but the same sedate, dingy, expressionless houses over the way, and the consciousness that streets

of such yet lay beyond those; and with, for sound, a background of an occasional organ, or a street-band with trombone buzzing at intervals like a huge bluebottle caught by the wing in a spider's web; or a cry of 'Cat's meat, meat!' or the receding rumble of a cab. I believe that, could the conversation have possibly taken place under *both* circumstances, and been noted down, a comparison would have brought out the little niceties of difference which I shall not attempt to describe, but which, I feel sure, are, by its surroundings, impressed upon the debate.

Our talk had, before the ladies left, already become animated, the subject being (what I contended to be) certain grave disadvantages of our state of Society: the littlenesses and meannesses which followed and attended—necessarily Spenser held—unnecessarily, I protested—upon our somewhat artificial life, and crowded civilization, and the nice distinctions of wealth, rank, &c. And, the little disturbance of the ladies' departure having subsided, we tackled to with fresh ardour. Excepting Smith, we were all, formerly, college friends; Smith and myself are clergymen; Norman and Spenser, laymen; the former the medical man of my district; the latter an ex-barrister, retired, and settled upon his own estate.

*Hardwiche.* 'Say what you please, I keep to my point. It is possible to have advantages, without *great* disadvantages; armies have marched, ere now, without camp followers; ships have their gathering of weeds and shells scraped off on coming into port, so that neither of these similes beat me. And it is the part of idleness, not of wisdom, to sit down content with any abuse.'



*Norman.* 'There's a vast deal of truth in what Hardwiche says, I am convinced, though I do not say that I agree with him altogether. There are, no doubt, certain distinctions and barriers necessary, and which it is neither possible nor desirable to overstep. Still there are, surely, some smaller etiquettes and conventionalities that will not bear a calm, wide, dispassionate searching into.'

*Hardwiche.* 'They are the curse of the land; they more than half counterbalance the great advantages of our high civilization; they narrow the mind and the heart; they degrade the idea of the brotherhood of men, not to say, of Christians; they interpose an unpassable barrier between beings of like blood, of like feelings, of like sympathies, of like hopes and fears, of like immortal destinies; they——'

*Spenser.* 'Stop, my dear fellow; you run on too fast; besides, you must not preach a sermon now. I think the talk sprang, at first, from a contention with Miss Tracy about pews; though many points have arisen since then, many members of your family of grievances. Take pews, however. Do you really mean to say that you would advocate Lord Helmsley, from the house over there, sitting down in the aisle between an old bundle of a woman who never washes, for fear of feeling the cold, and some Hodge who exhales essence of mille-boots, and extrait de bad smoke and corduroys? I put the case at its strongest.'

*Norman.* 'I did not understand Hardwiche to be either supposing or treating of that case.'

*Hardwiche.* 'You are right, Norman. It would have to be discussed by itself, and the discussion would bring in, necessarily, deeper and graver arguments and authorities than we are dealing with

now. But just say, if you will, what your impression of my meaning was?'

*Norman.* 'I imagine that you were talking more of the little—I can't help calling them, with you, unnecessary and unmeaning distinctions, separations, and jealousies, which exist especially in the middle and upper classes, and, most of all, in societies and parishes within business distance of London.'

*Hardwiche.* 'Exactly; the kind of thing which Dickens has so well drawn in his account in "Pickwick," of the ball at Rochester. I have the book in the room; stop, here it is. Ah! in this one passage there is expressed a great deal of what I mean:

"Dockyard people of upper rank don't know dockyard people of lower rank; dockyard people of lower rank don't know small gentry; small gentry don't know tradespeople; commissioner don't know anybody."

'But the whole scene is admirable; often you could perfectly match it in real life; and shades of the state of feeling are perceptible more or less everywhere nowadays, even when the exhibition of it is rather less gross. Here again:

"'What's Mr. Smithie?' inquired Mr. Tracy Tupman."

"'Something in the yard,' replied the stranger. Mr. Smithie bowed deferentially to Sir Thomas Clubber; and Sir Thomas Clubber acknowledged the salute with conscious condescension. Lady Clubber took a telescopic view of Mrs. Smithie and family through her eye-glass, and Mrs. Smithie stared in her turn at Mrs. Somebody else, whose husband was not in the dockyard at all."

'Compare with this the bearing of Sir Lancelot of the Lake in the Idylls:—

'Then the great knight, the darling of the court,  
Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall  
Stept with all grace, and not with half disdain  
*Had under grace, as in a smaller time,*  
But kindly man moving among his kind.'

Spenser. 'How spitefully, and with what evil relish he gave that "*smaller time!*" But I am glad, Hardwiche, that you gave that last quotation. It exactly expresses my case. It is easy enough, no doubt, where there is a real chasm of severance, in rank, &c., to waive that superiority; and you are safe in descending, and, still more, in hiding the fact that you are descending; because your condescension is sure not to be taken advantage of, or, because, if it be, you can retire across the chasm again. But the case is quite different, where, a real disparity or dissimilarity existing, class shades into class, like tint into tint in a bundle of wool; and, the concession made, retreat would be awkward, if not impossible. Practically, you *must* keep to yourself, and keep people in their places, say I, and it is Quixotic to oppose facts with an ideal theory of what things *ought* to be.'

Norman. 'You a little beg the question by calling it an *ideal* theory.'

Smith. 'Does Hardwiche mean to say that men of refinement, of taste, of education—gentlemen, in fact—are to fraternize, to be intimate, and hail-fellow-well-met, with—pardon the expression, Hardwiche, I know you hate it, but it expresses my meaning;—snobs? Fancy my sitting now with Messrs. Thump, Bump, and Clatter, over this wine, in this room; a perfect litter of H's upon the floor; and no two ideas of mine tallying with two ideas of theirs.

I own I am on the opposition benches.'

Hardwiche. 'I mean nothing of the kind. But you can be civil and courteous to a person, without being intimate with him. There is a middle course between staring at a man as though you were denizens of different planets, and making him your bosom friend.'

Spenser. 'These are but generals. Descend to particulars, man! An instance, an instance!'

Hardwiche. 'Well, I will give you an instance. A lady, a friend of mine, came with her husband, soon after their marriage, to a living to which he had just been presented. Mrs. Smithies, the banker's wife, calls upon her, and is very (not to say, obtrusively) gracious and condescending. A ring at the bell, and Mrs. Phelps, the attorney's wife, is announced. Mrs. S. still stays on, but, seemingly, in perfect unconsciousness of the entrance of a third party into the room. The hostess finds her position rather awkward, having to keep up an alternate conversation with two people, neither of whom seems in the least aware of the other's presence. So, knowing that they are, at least, fellow-parishioners, and unconscious of, or, still better, regardless of the ways of this small state of things in which we live nowadays—she introduces, with a graceful, "Of course you know," Mrs. Phelps to Mrs. Smithies. Oh, the look she got! Mrs. S., after a scarcely perceptible bow of the head, leaves the house; and sits down and indites a grave lecture upon the ignorance and want of knowledge of the world, evinced by such an enormous mistake as that of introducing to each other two morning callers.'

Smith. 'Well, I think there was much to be said on both sides.'

Spenser. 'I don't. I think Mrs. S.

was perfectly and entirely right. Fancy, in a small town, having to know everybody, whether you care to know them or not. And Mrs. S., had she wished to have made Mrs. P.'s acquaintance, had had it in her choice to have called. Therefore your friend really forced an acquaintance upon her, and took away her free will.'

*Smith.* 'Certainly, there would be an awkwardness in their meeting afterwards, which there was not before. Now, if Mrs. S. did not bow, it would be rude, which, before, it was not; and yet she did not want to keep up the acquaintance.'

*Norman.* 'I did not understand Hardwiche to say that any acquaintance, or, at least, approach to intimacy, was rendered necessary. It seems that only an awkwardness, not to say a vulgar discourtesy, was removed.'

*Spenser.* 'There's Norman, as usual, the bottle-holder of our ring; or the Libra of our Zodiac. He sees all fair, says little, but woe betide you if you venture an unguarded statement, or go a little beyond mathematical exactness in the heat of an argument, or the vividness of metaphor. I hate such a cold-blooded, dangerous animal. He sits, like a dog, blinking its eyes tranquilly in its kennel; but I pity you, if you just step within reach of its chain.'

*Smith.* 'Or like a wicket-keeper, not Lockyer was more deadly, if you do but step one inch out of your ground to meet the ball.'

*Norman.* 'You flatter me. Let me call myself, if I may venture to do so, the umpire, who stands, bat in hand, and steps forward to pronounce on a foul hit, or a no ball, or a wide.'

*Spenser.* 'Exactly; we accept it. And, recollect, the umpire is silent, unless appealed to.'

*Hardwiche.* 'Very well thought

of, since his voice seems to be adverse to yourself. But I interpose, and beg him to consider himself as appealed to, whenever he sees aught loose or unfair. But this side-wind of personality has blown off the balls; umpire, set them up, give me guard, and let us proceed.'

*Spenser.* 'There is already a shooter on the way, that will unsettle your bails again, I fear. I have said, and I say, that Mrs. Clergyman put her foot into it, in that introduction case, and that your instance has broken down. Why is Mrs. Banker to be compelled, will she nill she, to know Mrs. Attorney? Why, I ask—and Echo answers, Why?'

*Hardwiche.* 'Now, really, this is too rich. Blinded by the foggy atmosphere in which you are content to live, you utterly miss the gist of the matter. My good man of the world, for what conceivably tolerable or decent reason should she object to knowing her? Not as an intimate friend; against that we have guarded. But just so far as to be able to behave towards her with common decency. Just so far, at least, as they could get on together;—granting that there were really such a deep gulf between all their tastes, their sympathies, and entire nature; granting one to be all refinement, and the other all vulgarity; just so far, at any rate, as a bow, and a courteous word at meeting, goes. Just so far as to avoid such an anomalous, detestable state of things, as the case of two neighbours and parishioners, obliged, at least, in this instance, to meet weekly as equals on one Day, in one House in the parish, sitting together in the room of a common friend, and staring at one another with as much fellow-feeling, sympathy, or civility, as Gog and Magog, or two Chinese images;

and reminding one of Punch and Toby, when innocently introduced to each other. Just so far as not to be a scandal upon Christendom, not to say, upon humanity. Just so far——'

*Spenser.* 'We are out of breath. I tell you, my dear fellow, as I often have occasion to say, that yours is only the clergyman's point of view.'

*Hardwiche.* 'I dare say it may be; you know I own a danger in this. But to say that mine is the clergyman's view does not touch my argument, unless you can also prove that it is the wrong view.'

*Smith.* 'Hear, hear!'

*Spenser.* '*Et tu, Brute?* I mean to say, Hardwiche, that of course, I agree, it would be intolerable for clergymen and their families to keep up this—perhaps anomalous, but, I maintain, necessary state of things. But you must not bind every one by clergyman's rules. Ah! here comes *Umpire.*'

*Norman.* 'I certainly think that Hardwiche ought to admit that the obligation is *stricter* upon the clergyman than upon the layman. But I submit that the difference is one of *degree*, not of *kind.*'

*Smith.* 'Let me say here what has often struck me. I am a clergyman, you will say, and therefore egotistic in this idea. Still, I say, with Hardwiche, if true, accept what I say; if false, reject it; but base your rejection on its being false, not on its being egotistic. I think, then, that the clergy are a wonderfully useful link between all classes. They pass from one to the other, and smooth down differences, and reconcile discrepancies, acquaint one class with what the others are doing, and bind all together. To do this [in perfection, the clergyman must of course be an educated

gentleman, with tact:—also an earnest-hearted man, with an aim and a mind above all the petty jealousies and heartburnings that he is to smooth down. He must be firm and bold, indeed, to resist and reform what is wrong; but if, spite of his careful Christian tact, he gives offence and makes enemies, he must never be a party to the quarrel, but always keep a loving heart and a friendly demeanour, and be on the watch for his opportunity of showing a different spirit from the narrow mind of the world. There are men, more or less up to this ideal, distributed all over England; and I do think that, as a mere engine of Government, they are not valued enough, and their working is often crippled by a small jealousy on the part of the very power to which they are such an aid. Of what importance as an auxiliary to Government is such a man, placed in a parish to be on good terms with all, to teach content and love, to draw all together by urging the tie of their common brotherhood, especially overbridging the chasm between rich and poor, by instituting between them the relation of reliever and relieved! Is not such a man a power in the policy of a nation; and the establishment all over England, of such a system as the parochial system, an immense, but undervalued, because noiseless, accessory on the side of content, good-fellowship, and good understanding between classes? Now, Spenser, say, "*There's nothing like leather, says the shoe-maker.*"'

*Spenser.* 'No, I won't; because you've said it for me. Besides, I may own that I agree with you; though I confess that I had not looked at the thing quite in that way before.'

*Norman.* Smith has stepped aside

from our beaten track. Allow me also to bring in a bye remark.

*Spenser.* 'What! Umpire going to take an innings?'

*Norman.* 'Did it ever occur to you that there is a difficulty in addressing servants, in the instance of letter-writing? I am a bachelor, you know, and find occasion, on returning from a three weeks' holiday, to address the highly respectable charwoman who presides over my establishment (I always send my servant home), to tell her to recall the maid, and order the dinner, and air the bed. How am I to address her? "*Dear Sal*" is absurd. "*SAL!*" is terrific;—it comes upon the opener of the letter like a pistol-shot;—"Reginald Norman presents his compliments to *Sal Nubbins*," seems hardly the thing.'

*Spenser.* 'I am aground.'

*Smith.* 'And I.'

*Hardwiche.* 'Room for the life-boat! That very clergyman's lady of whom I have been speaking cut, for me, the Gordian knot, once and for ever. She instructed me to begin thus:

"To *Sal Nubbins*.'

'That magic "*To*" makes all smooth; does it not?'

*All.* 'It does. Admirable!'

*Hardwiche.* 'She further told me to end, "*Your well-wisher*." And this phrase may be useful to *Spenser*: I, kindly man, moving among my kind, have no difficulty nor scruple in signing myself the friend of the lowest-born, she that ever blacked her master's linen, and forgot his boots.'

*Spenser.* 'Chair, chair.'

*Hardwiche.* 'Well, have we said all that need be said as to the morning call? I had, indeed, heaps more to say; but I know that, as *Spenser* has reminded me, I must not sermonize here

and now. Still, I protest that it is hard to speak of life, with life's kernel left out; to treat of things apart from their deeper meaning; and to account for life's movements and stoppages, with a mutual understanding to ignore the mainspring.'

*Spenser.* 'There is one point on which I could almost let you into your pulpit, and secretly applaud while you stormed, and turned the world inside out, and launched withering bolts at flattered fashion in the pews.'

*Smith.* 'And that is—'

*Spenser.* 'Worldliness. I mean all those littlenesses of society—in religious people;—people, that is, religious in the sense of young West-End misses and Exeter Hall mammas;—fashionably religious; religious just as a variety in worldliness for Sundays, and as an excuse to hate people. I think *Hardwiche* would be the man for these folk. I'd put him in some "popular preacher's" pulpit, and listen to him for an hour on that topic.'

*Hardwiche.* 'I warm at the thought. O that I were in such a rostrum! O that I could ascend a vaster platform;—that I could surreptitiously creep (a sermon hid under my plain garb) into the pulpit, say, of a popular magazine, the editor conniving, and whispering, "Fire away; say what you like; your words shall be safe and exempt from the pasted shroud that envelopes the pale form of a rejected MS.'

*Spenser* (aside). 'Don't interrupt;—mark the expression of his eye;—we are in for the discourse. I am docile.'

*Hardwiche.* 'Think of it! The great unpewed world lying beneath me; the single vast span of the arch of heaven overhead. At least a million attentive listeners for a congregation;—aye,

and beyond these a mighty perspective of unnumbered myriads of the unborn, who should take the place of the departing audience, and hear the words that should volley on, when the tired speaker was in his grave!

*Smith.* 'Come, give us just a taste of your thunder.'

*Hardwiche.* 'Were I an orator, as—S. Winton is—thunder it should be. Still, I would do my best.—You prate, I would say, of the worldliness of balls, parties, theatres—while in your whole life worldliness, in all its most despicable littlenesses and trivialities, is kept up:—the worldliness of narrow, mean, hair-splitting social distinctions and jealousies. You have the abominations of caste without the excuse of heathenism.'

'Look under the shallow, weak currents of life's surface, and get at its deep, vast, unmoved meaning. Learn that you are something more than a lady, or a gentleman. Look under life, I say, and find out that you are *men*—aye, more—that you are *Christians*—and *BROTHERS*. And call to mind that those at whom you sneer at as vulgar, underbred, will grow one day out of the accidents of this lesser state of things, and prove, perhaps, the aristocracy of the grand society of a larger world.'

*Servant* (entering). 'Tea is ready, sir.'

*Spenser.* '*A la bonne heure.* And yet, methinks, I was slightly wrapt. You'd stir them up, Hardwiche; and I agree with most of your thunder; but you verge on the democratic.'

*Hardwiche.* 'Not at all. I am a High Churchman, and a Conservative. I would not sink social distinctions, except when they clash with higher, nobler laws. Then I hold that social distinctions, and not Christianity, ought to go to the wall.'

'Come, let us to tea. We can talk of pews another day. The very word depresses me. They are the fruitful source of half the quarrels in a parish: the very apple of discord, in adjudging which to one, the ill-fated Paris must offend, mortally offend, two others. Pews? Let me take the taste out of my ears by means of Hood's Autumn song. I hear Miss Tracy preluding it. So good-bye to the flitting bats, and the deepening sky, and the white river, and the woods that edge it, and that have grown so solemn, deep, impervious, and grave. There is one consolation—(to cap our talk)—that, at least in the backwoods and clearings of an "*uncivilized*" country, "*HUMANUS SUM*" is sufficient introduction.'







‘HEIGH-HO, THE HOLLY!’

SO they sang in the dear old days  
 That we see thro’ poetry’s magic haze,  
 Tho’ all their reality’s vanished;  
 When nobody thought of talking prose,  
 When Rosalind travelled in doublet and hose  
 To a forest where Dukes were banished.

That’s not Rosalind: O dear no—  
 That damsel under the mistletoe  
 Who seems to think life jolly:  
 And as to the gentleman there behind,  
 He would’nt have pluck to kiss Rosalind.  
 Can’t you fancy his ‘*Heigh-ho, the Holly!*’

## HUNTING IN THE MIDLANDS.



THE FARMER'S OLD MARE.

'JEM PIKE has just come round, gentlemen, to say that they will be able to hunt to-day, after all: and as it's about starting time, I think, gentlemen, I will, with your permission, order your horses round.'

The announcement, as it came to us over our breakfast at a hostelry which I will call the Lion, in a market town which I will call Chipping Ongar—a highly convenient hunting rendezvous in the Midlands—was not a little welcome. Jem Pike was the huntsman of the pack, and Jem Pike's message was an intimation that the frost of last night had not destroyed our sport for the day. The morning had broke in what Jem would call a 'plagney ugly fashion:' from an artistic point

of view it had been divine: for hunting purposes it had been execrable. A thin coating of ice on one's bath indoors, a good stiff hoar frost out, crystallized trees, and resonant roads—all this was seasonable, very, and 'pretty to look at, too.' But it was 'bad for riding:' and we had not come to the Lion at Chipping Ongar in order to contemplate the beauties of nature, but to brace our nerves with the healthy excitement of the chase. Full of misgivings we descended to breakfast, in hunting toggery notwithstanding. As the sun shone out with increased brilliance we began to grow more cheerful. The frost, we said, was nothing, and all trace of it would be gone before noon. The waiter shook his head

dubiously, suggested that there was a good billiard-table, and inquired as to the hour at which we would like to dine. But the waiter, as the event proved, was wrong, and we were still in the middle of breakfast when the message of the huntsman of the Chipping Ongar pack arrived—exactly what we had each of us said. Of course the frost was nothing: we had known as much; and now the great thing was to get breakfast over, and then 'to horse away.'

After all there is nothing for comfort like the old-fashioned hunting hotels, and unfortunately they are decreasing in number every year. Still the Lion at Chipping Ongar remains; and I am happy to say that I know of a few more like the Lion. They are recognizable at a glance. You may tell them by the lack of nineteenth century filagree decoration which characterizes their exterior, by the cut of the waiters, by the knowing look of the boots. Snug are their coffee-rooms, luxurious their beds, genial their whole atmosphere. It is just possible that if you were to take your wife to such an establishment as the Lion, she would complain that an aroma of tobacco-smoke pervaded the atmosphere. But the hunting hotel is conspicuously a bachelor's house. Its proprietor, or proprietress, does not lay himself or herself out for ladies and ladies' maids. It is their object to make single gentlemen, and gentlemen who enjoy the temporary felicity of singleness, at home. If it is your first visit, you are met in a manner which clearly intimates that you were expected. If you are an old *habitué* you find that all your wants are anticipated, and all your peculiar fancies known. The waiter understands exactly—marvellous is the

memory of this race of men—what you like for breakfast: whether you prefer a 'wet dish' or a 'dry:' and recollects to a nicety your particular idea of a dinner. Under any circumstances a week's hunting is a good and healthy recreation: but it is difficult to enjoy a week's hunting more perfectly than in one of these hostelrys, which have not, I rejoice to say, yet been swept away by the advancing tide of modern improvement.

Of whom did our company consist? We were not a party of Meltonian squires, such as it would have delighted the pen of *Nimrod* to describe. We were neither Osbaldestones nor Sir Harry Goodricks: neither Myddelton Bidulphs nor Holyoakes. A Warwickshire or an Oxfordshire hunting field differs very materially, so far as regards its *personnel*, from a Leicester or a Northamptonshire gathering. The latter still preserves the memories and the traditions of a past *régime*, when hunting was confined to country gentlemen, farmers, and a few rich strangers: the former is typical of the new order of things under which hunting has ceased to be a class amusement, and has become a generally popular sport. Now it is not too much to claim for hunting at the present day this character. The composition of the little band which on the morning now in question left the Lion Hotel at Chipping Ongar, bound for cover, was no unimportant testimony to this fact. We were half a dozen in number, and comprised among ourselves a barrister, a journalist, a doctor, and a couple of Civil servants, who had allowed ourselves a week's holiday, and who, being fond of riding, had determined to take it in this way. In an average hunting field of the

present day you will discover men of all kinds of professions and occupations—attorneys, auctioneers, butchers, bakers, innkeepers, artists, sailors, authors. There is no town in England which has not more than one pack of hounds in its immediate vicinity; and you will find that the riders who make up the regular field are inhabitants of the town—men who are at work four or five days in the week at their desk or counter, and who hunt the remaining one or two. There is no greater instrument of social harmony than that of the modern hunting field: and, it may be added, there is no institution which affords a healthier opportunity for the ebullition of what may be called the democratic instincts of human nature. The hunting field is the paradise of equality: and the only title to recognition is achievement. 'Rank,' says a modern authority on the sport, 'has no privilege; and wealth can afford no protection.' Out of the hunting field there may be a wide gulf that separates peasant from peer, tenant from landlord. But there is no earthly power which can compel the tenant to give way to the landlord, or the peasant to the peer, when the scent is good and the hounds are in full cry.

As we get to the bottom of the long and irregularly-paved street which constitutes the main thoroughfare—indeed, I might add, the entire town of Chipping Ongar—we fall in with other equestrians bound for Branksome Bushes—the meet fixed for that day—distant not more than two miles from Chipping Ongar itself. There was the chief medical man of the place, mounted on a very clever horse, the head of the Chipping Ongar bank, and some half-dozen strangers. As we drew near to 'the Bushes' we saw that there

had already congregated a very considerable crowd. There were young ladies, some who had come just to see the throw off, and others with an expression in their faces, and a cut about their habits, which looked like business, and which plainly indicated that they intended, if possible, to be in at the death. There were two or three clergymen who had come from adjoining parishes, and one or two country squires. There were some three or four Oxford undergraduates—Chipping Ongar is within a very convenient distance of the city of academic towers—who were 'staying up' at their respective colleges for the purpose of reading during a portion of the vacation, and who found it necessary to vary the monotony of intense intellectual application by an occasional gallop with the Chipping Ongar or Bicester pack. Then, of course, there was the usual contingent of country doctors: usual, I say, for the medical profession gravitates naturally towards equestrianism. If a country doctor rides at all, you may be sure he rides well, and is well mounted, moreover. There was also a very boisterous and hard-riding maltster, who had acquired a considerable reputation in the district: a fair sprinkling of snobs: one or two grooms and stable cads. There was also an illustrious novelist of the day, the guest of Sir Cloudesley Spanker, and Sir Cloudesley Spanker, Bart., himself.

We had drawn Branksome Bushes and the result was a blank. Local sportsmen commenced to be prolific of suggestions. There was Henham Gorse, for instance, and two gentlemen asseverated most positively, upon intelligence which was indisputably true, that there was a fox in that quarter. Another noble sportsman, who prided him-

self especially on his local knowledge, pressed upon Jem Pike the necessity of turning his attention next to the Enderby Woods, to all of which admonitions, however, Mr. Pike resolutely turned a deaf ear. These are among the difficulties which the huntsman of a subscription pack has to encounter or withstand. Every Nimrod who pays his sovereign or so a year to the support of the hounds considers he has a right to a voice in their management. Marvellous is the sensitiveness of the amateur sportsman. It is a well-established fact, that you cannot more grievously wound or insult the feelings of the gentleman who prides himself upon his acquaintance with horses than by impugning the accuracy of his judgment in any point of equine detail. Hint to your friend, who is possessed with the idea that he is an authority upon the manners and customs of foxes in general, and upon those of any one neighbourhood in particular, that there exists a chance of his fallibility, and he will resent the insinuation as a mortal slight. Jem Pike had his duty to do to the pack and to his employers, and he steadfastly refused to be guided or misguided by amateur advice. So, at Jem's sweet will, we jogged on from Branksome Bushes to Jarvis Spinney, and at Jarvis Spinney the object of our quest was obtained.

'Tis a pretty sight, the find and the throw off. You see the gorse literally alive with the hounds, their sterns flourishing above its surface. Something has excited them, and there 'the beauties' go, leaping over each other's backs. Then issues a shrill kind of whimper: in a moment one hound challenges, and next another. Then from the huntsman comes a mighty cheer that is heard to the echo. 'He's gone,' say half a score of

voices. Hats are pressed on, cigars thrown away, bridles gathered well up, and lo and behold they are off. A very fair field we were on the particular morning to which I here allude. The rector, I noticed, who had merely come to the meet, was well up with the first of us. Notwithstanding remonstrances addressed by timid papas and well-drilled grooms in attendance, Alice and Clara Vernon put their horses at the first fence, and that surmounted had fairly crossed the Rubicon. Nay, the contagion of the enthusiasm spread, as is always the case on such occasions, for their revered parents themselves were unable to resist the attraction. Sir Cloudesley Spanker asserted his position in the first rank, as did also the distinguished novelist his guest.

It has been remarked that all runs with foxhounds are alike on paper and different in reality. We were fortunate enough to have one that was certainly above the average with the Chipping Ongar hounds. Our fox chose an excellent line of country, and all our party from the Lion enjoyed the distinction of being in at the death. Mishaps there were, for all very woody screws came signally to grief. Old Sir Cloudesley related with much grim humour the melancholy aspect that two dismounted strangers presented who had taken up their lodging in a ditch. The two Miss Vernons acquitted themselves admirably; so did the rector, and I am disposed to think that the company both of the ladies and the farmers vastly improved our hunting field. It is quite certain that clergymen, more than any other race of men, require active change, and they get what they can get nowhere better than in a hunting field. Nor in the modern hunting field is there anything which either ladies or

clergymen need fear to face. The strong words and the strange oaths, the rough language, in fine, what has been called 'the roaring lion element,' these are accessories of the chase which have long since become things of the past. And the consummation is a natural consequence of the catholicity which hunting has acquired. There are no abuses like class abuses. Once admit the free light of publicity, and they vanish.

There are hunting farmers and hunting parsons, clergymen who make the chase the business of their life, and who get a day with the hounds as an agreeable relief to their professional toils. There is not much to be said in favour of the former order, which has, by the way, nearly become extinct. It survives in Wales and in North Devon yet, and curious are the authentic stories which might be narrated about these enthusiastic heroes of top-boots and spur. There is a little village in North Devon where, till within a very few years, the meet of the stag-hounds used to be given out from the reading desk every Sunday after the first lesson. Years ago, when one who is now a veteran amongst the fox-hunting clerics of that neighbourhood first entered upon his new duties, he was seized with a desire to reform the ways of the natives and the practices of the priests. Installed in his new living, he determined to forswear hounds and hunting entirely. He even carried his orthodoxy to such a point as to institute daily services, which at first, however, were very well attended. Gradually his congregation fell off, much to the grief of the enthusiastic pastor. One day, observing his churchwardens lingering in the aisle after the service had been concluded, he went up and asked them whether they could at all inform him of

the origin of the declension. 'Well, sir,' said one of the worthies thus addressed, 'we were a going to speak to you about the very same thing. You see, sir, the parson of this parish do always keep hounds. Mr. Froude, he kept foxhounds, Mr. Bellew he kept harriers, and least ways we always expect the parson of this parish to keep a *small cry of summut*.' Whereupon the rector expressed his entire willingness to contribute a sum to the support of 'a small cry' of harriers, provided his congregation found the remainder. The experiment was tried and was completely successful, nor after that day had the new rector occasion to complain of a deficiency in his congregation.

Tories of the old school, for instance Sir Cloudesley Spanker, who has quitted himself so gallantly to-day, would no doubt affirm that fox-hunting has been fatally injured as a sport by railways. The truth of the proposition is extremely questionable, and it may be dismissed in almost the same breath as the sinister predictions which are never verified of certain naval and military officers on the subject of the inevitable destiny of their respective services. Railways have no doubt disturbed the domestic tranquillity of the fox family, and have compelled its various members to forsake in some instances the ancient Lares and Penates. But the havoc which the science of man has wrought the skill of man has obviated. Foxes are quite as dear to humanity as they can be to themselves; and in proportion as the natural dwellings of foxes have been destroyed artificial homes have been provided for them. Moreover, railways have had the effect of bringing men together, and of establishing all over the country new fox-hunting centres.

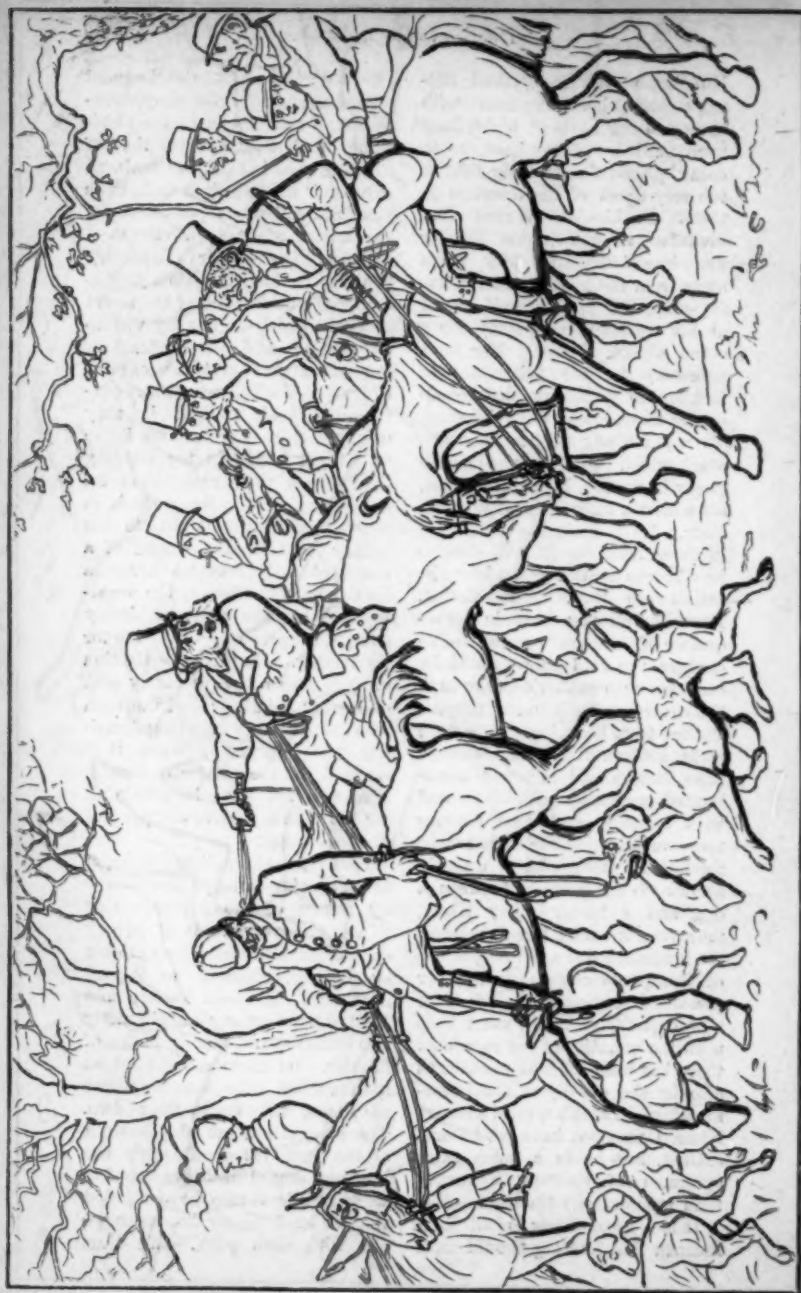


Hunting wants money, and railways have brought men with money to the spots at which they were needed. They have, so to speak, placed the hunting field at the very doors of the dwellers in town. In London a man may breakfast at home, have four or five hours' hunting fifty miles away from the metropolitan chimney-pots, and find himself seated at his domestic mahogany for a seven o'clock dinner. Nor is it necessary for the inhabitant of London to go such a distance to secure an excellent day's hunting. To say nothing of her Majesty's staghounds, there are first-rate packs in Surrey, Essex, and Kent, all within a railway journey of an hour. Here again the inveterate *laudator temporis acti* will declare he discerns greater ground for dissatisfaction than congratulation. He will tell you that in consequence of those confounded steam-engines the field gets flooded by cockneys who can't ride, who mob the covert, and effectually prevent the fox from breaking. Of course it is indisputable that railways have familiarised men who never hunted previously with horses and with hounds, and that persons now venture upon the chase whose forefathers may have scarcely known to distinguish between a dog and a horse. Very likely, moreover, it would be much better for fox-hunting if a fair proportion of these new-comers had never presented themselves in this their new capacity. At the same time with the quantity of the horsemen there has been some improvement also in the quality of the horsemanship. Leach's typical cockney Nimrod may not have yet become extinct, but he is a much rarer specimen of sporting humanity than was formerly the case.

It is a great thing for all Englishmen that hunting should have

received this new development among us, and for the simple reason that salutary as is the discipline of all field sports, that of hunting is so in the most eminent degree. 'Ride straight to hounds and talk as little as possible,' was the advice given by a veteran—our old friend Sir Cloudesley Spanker for instance—to a youngster who was discussing the secret mode in which popularity was to be secured; and the sententious maxim contains a great many grains of truth. Englishmen admire performance, and without it they despise words. Performance is the only thing which in the hunting field meets with recognition on sufferance, and the braggadocia is most inevitably brought to his proper level in the course of a burst of forty minutes across a good country. Again, the hunting field is the most admirably contrived species of discipline for the temper. Displays of irritation or annoyance are promptly and effectively rebuked; and the man who cannot bear with fitting humility the reprimand, when it is merited, of the master or huntsman, will not have long to wait for the demonstrative disapproval of his compeer.

Hunting has been classed amongst those sports—*delectata matribus*—by reason of the intrinsic risk which it involves. Is it in any degree more dangerous than cricket or football, shooting or Alpine climbing? In Great Britain and Ireland there are at present exactly two hundred and twenty packs of hounds. Of these some hunt as often as five days a week, others not more frequently than two. The average may probably be fixed at the figure three. Roughly the hunting season lasts twenty-five weeks, while it may be computed that at least ninety horsemen go out with each pack. We thus



GOING TO COVER.



have one million four hundred and fifty-eight thousand as the total of the occasions on which horse and rider feel the perils of the chase. 'If,' says Mr. Anthony Trollope, in the course of some admirable remarks on the subject, 'we say that a bone is broken annually in each hunt, and a man killed once in two years in all the hunts together, we think that we exceed the average of casualties. At present there is a spirit abroad which is desirous of maintaining the manly excitement of enterprise in which some peril is to be encountered, but which demands at the same time that it should be done without any risk of injurious circumstances. Let us have the excitement and pleasure of danger, but for God's sake no danger itself. This at any rate is unreasonable.'

These observations have somewhat diverted me from the thread of the original narrative. Should, however, the reader desire more precise information as to the particular line of country taken up by the fox on that eventful day with the Chipping Ongar hounds, will he not find it written for him in the pages of 'Bell'?

So we met, so we hunted, and so we rode home and dined; and if any person who is not entirely a stranger to horses wishes to enjoy a few days' active recreation and healthy holidays, he cannot, I would submit, for the reasons which I have above attempted to enumerate, do better than go down to the Lion at Chipping Ongar, and get a few days with the Chipping Ongar hounds.



## AN OCTAVE OF FRIENDS.

BY E. LYNN LINTON.

## I.

## AMY SILVERTONGUE.

I HAVE a rather fine array of friends. People say that one true friend is as much as you can expect in a lifetime; but I have eight—a full octave—so that I ought to think myself exceptionally lucky; and I do so. I will give you a description of them; and I will begin with Amy Silvertongue.

There was never a more affectionate creature than Amy Silvertongue. She positively worships me—so she says; looks on me as her moral guide and personal paragon; and praises me to my face with such artless *abandon* that I sometimes wish the earth would open and swallow me—or her—for very shame at the excess of her flattery. She lets the world at large know her devotion, and does her best to make it share her enthusiasm. Wherever she goes she sounds my praises, on no tinkling cymbal with its half-notes and uncertain sounds, but through a six-foot trumpet that allows of no mistake as to what she means. I should think people must be tired of hearing of me and my virtues. I am sure I should hate any one I heard so extravagantly and perpetually belauded, and be inclined to deny that he or she possessed even the most elementary morals, if any one tried to thrust him or her down my throat as such a bit of absolute perfection, as Amy Silvertongue tries to thrust me down the throats of her friends and acquaintances.

And the odd part of it is, that I really do not know her very well. I saw her for a few weeks last summer, down at Harpenden: when

I lodged at one side of the common and she had her quarters at the other, and we met among the furze-bushes on occasions: and that was all. But since then she has taken possession of me, as it were, and speaks of me to my oldest friends as if no one but herself understands me; telling the most ordinary circumstances of my life, which might be published at the market-cross, as so many confidences made exclusively to her as my chosen confidante: which she is not. I wish she would not talk so much about me; and I rather think she does me a great deal of harm, though of course the good creature means only to do me service. But it is curious how, since last summer, people whom Amy knows, and with whom I used to have pleasant relations enough, now look quite coldly on me; and I am as often as not met with some covert sneer at my superhuman virtues, which render such poor, clay-footed mortals as they are unfit company for me. Why, the Vespas all but cut me last week; and Mrs. Vespa said, with an uncomfortable smile, that, from what Amy Silvertongue had said of me, she really felt she ought to apologise for her presumption in asking me to visit *them*. And I like the Vespas well enough, and am far from feeling them inferior to myself in any particular; except, perhaps, in temper. At all events, I was sorry at the way in which Mrs. Vespa had taken Amy's eulogiums on me, and felt crimson with shame and vexation.

Amy is so fond of me too, that

she not only exaggerates any little good I may possess, till she makes it—of course quite unintentionally—more disagreeable than a fault, but she even sees my real faults as virtues. She must do so, else she would not tell everybody of them as she does. I am perhaps a little too punctual, a little too intolerant of slipshod disorder in my own establishment; but I care nothing what other people do in their establishments, which are not mine. I am not my brother's keeper, inside his castle or out; but Amy paints me as the incarnation of priggish severity, which she calls by certain fine names that gild but do not disguise, and to which there is only one and the same hidden meaning of hateful pedantry. And once when I was dining at Mrs. Laglast's, she made that innocent little woman absurdly timid and uncomfortable by her whispered exhortations to do this, and not to do that, because I was there. It was very kind of her to cater for me so; but she would have done better to have left me alone and allowed me to glide into the no-order patronized by pretty, *décousue* little Mrs. Laglast; for I liked that naïve, scrambling, untidy young woman, and I wished to be friends with her. As it was, Amy frightened her so that she will never get over her first disagreeable impression of me; and to the last I shall be a kind of bogie in her mind, critical, severe, unbending, whose presence will be a damper and a restraint, and on whose kind feeling she will have no reliance whatever I may say or do.

If Amy Silvertongue is the only friend I have who sees me, faults and all, as so much perfection incarnate, I am by no means the only perfect friend she has. I have often envied her the good fortune which seems to have guided her in her choice of intimates. She

knows such remarkable people! It is very interesting to hear her speak of them. For instance, there are the Smiths, who, she says, are the most refined, the Browns the most learned, the Joneses the most amiable, people in the world. I confess I could not quite see it when I was introduced to them; for Mrs. Smith dropped her h's, though, to be sure, she was charmingly dressed; Brown made a gross mistake about English history in the thirteenth century, which he had got all mixed up with the fifteenth on a point with which I happened to be acquainted; but then he talked a great deal about Kelts and Kymri, kistvaens and the pre-historic man, the polariscope, and the new chemical formulae, of all of which I knew nothing. And I did not fully realize the amiability of the Joneses, when Amy herself told me how they had turned a poor servant-girl out of the house at a minute's notice, only on suspicion—not proof—and would neither give her a character nor allow her to defend herself. But then Amy is so goodnatured she always sees things at their best; and though she laughed to me at Mrs. Smith's lapse of manners the other day, when that worthy lady would persist in talking to Sir James Grubbe the retired candlemaker, on the merits of ozokerit and the illuminating power of wax, to poor Sir James's visible chagrin, yet she still goes back to the same theme; and two minutes after you may hear her declare that Mrs. Smith is the best-bred woman she knows, and quite a study for every one to copy.

Amy Silvertongue is so far comforting that she never allows one's most patent defects to pass as defects. All the clouds that float on the horizon of her friends have not only silver linings, but are silver



all through. If any one is shabbily dressed, the attention of the room is called to that fact under the text of being 'distinguished by artistic negligence'; a fit of ill-humour is commented on and brought out into the light as 'gravity,' 'thoughtfulness,' or 'a righteous indignation'; an indiscreet confidence is retailed as an evidence of the babblers' 'childlike candour,' and every person of her acquaintance is made free of the confession as a proof of the transparent innocence of the confessor. To this day my uncle Hunks, who despises both Amy and sieves, holds me as a sieve because Amy ran open-mouthed to him in my praise, telling him something I had just been weak enough to whisper to her in confidence. My uncle has not forgotten this, and never will; and he told me frankly enough, if also surlily enough, that he had no idea of leaving his money to a fool who could not keep a quiet tongue or his own counsel. That moment of injudicious praise on Amy's part has, I feel convinced, cost me my assigned legacy.

One fact however, I have noticed in Amy Silvertongues's life: she does not keep her friends. One by one those around whom she has flung her arms in public, and shown to the gaping world as her dearest and nearest, those whom she has flattered to their faces and vaunted behind their backs as the best and noblest and dearest darlings in existence, yet to whom, unfortunately—I don't know how or why—she has brought more enmity than friendship, and roused up a general antagonism throughout society—one by one they fall away from her, and let her down more or less easily. Each season finds her with a new set of black swans; but the old ones have deserted her lures, and I really think that I must do the same; for her

flattery to my face abashes and humiliates me; her praises seem to do me more substantial damage than the out-spoken blame of the bitterest enemy; and her patronage, which is as oppressive as all the rest, puts me in a false position, and hurts my pride as well as my prospects, while it lowers my social status frightfully. I wonder if Amy Silvertongue is the nice, artless, and affectionate creature she passes for, or if she is as clever as other people, and 'knows her world' like the best. For, to be frank, I think her system of paragon means really a system of social steps, on the principle of like to like; for if you are not the rose, the next best thing is to be near it.

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## II.

### ODO CROSSGRAINE.

If Amy Silvertongue is at one end of the scale, Odo Crossgraine is at the other. With the one I have no faults, with the other I am allowed next to no virtues. If perpetual putting to rights, and hearing disagreeable truths plainly stated would make men perfect, Crossgraine's friends would be the very salt of the earth. He seems to think he was born to be the moral Bumble of his circle, and he certainly does his work with a will. I never knew any one with such a horror of flattery or weak compliance as Odo Crossgraine; never one with such a stern sense of right and wrong. And the worst is, he is so sharp you cannot take him in. Do your best to conceal any little peccadillo you may have committed, and he is down on you like a hawk on a hedge-sparrow. He is not to be hoodwinked, he says; and he lets you know it.

You went to the Derby did you? and lost a pony on the favourite?

Odo Crossgraine knows all about it; though how the mischief he found it out passed your comprehension; and he takes you aside in your own drawing-room and lectures you stoutly on your iniquity. *Facilis descensus*, he says, sternly, when you wish to make light of your sin; and then he goes on to draw a picture of your future if this kind of thing continues, wherein you see yourself as the shabby clerk where now you are the prosperous partner, your wife keeping a small day-school for the sons of bankrupt tradesmen, and your children put out as drapers' assistants and milliners' girls. You are by no means a professed turfite, and your income is good enough to allow of the loss of half a dozen ponies without feeling it; you make one bet in the year, and only one, and you do not care two straws whether you win or lose; but somehow Odo makes you feel yourself not far from a blackleg; and you leave him in an abject frame of mind, self condemned beyond the power of rehabilitation.

So it is in everything; and you cannot be offended if he takes gloomy views of your morality, seeing how unaffectedly anxious he is for your good. Besides, he does not parade his exhortations. He delivers them in private only, so that your pride is not wounded by the presence of a third party. To be sure he takes care to tell you that he has just been lecturing young Rattletrap for the shameful way in which he is carrying on with Laura Mooney; that he takes to himself the credit of Charles Spanker's conversion from an idle man about town to a steady City merchant; and that it was he who prevented the final separation of Mr. and Mrs. Vespa, and brought them together again when every one else had failed.

Still, you cannot swear that he will tell of you as he has told of them; only, you generally find out that he does, and that in a day or two all your common friends have heard that you lost heavily on the Derby, and that Odo Crossgraine felt himself bound to talk to you very seriously, and to get you to promise that you would discontinue a vice which was leading you and yours to destruction.

I never knew such a universal referee, as well as reformer, as Crossgraine. There is nothing that he has not considered—studied quite deeply you know—and about which he is not therefore competent to give an opinion. And he is by no means shy in giving his opinion, especially as it is invariably in opposition. I would have taken a house in Pimlico, but for him. It was a charming house, moderate rent, right aspect, proper size, just the thing for me all round; but Odo stopped me.

'Pimlico, my dear,' he said, with his eyebrows lost in the roots of his hair; 'bless my soul, what are you thinking of? Pimlico is a swamp, a mere slough floored with a little porous concrete—lets all the damp through; fever, ague, typhus, diphtheria—you'll never have a clean house if you go there; and at high tide your basement will be under water. No, no! not Pimlico if you have any regard for your health; and dear Maggie requiring a bracing air as she does; how can you?'

Of course this shut me up on the spot, and I lost the house which seemed to have been made for me. The odd thing is, I cannot find any other that would suit of which Crossgraine approves. He has called my attention to one or two, as all that can be

desired, hygienically considered; but they might as well be in Timbuctoo for convenience of locality as where they are; and while some are mere nut-shells which will not hold half my family, others are barracks where the carpets alone would ruin me. Those which I would take, if left to myself, he will not hear of; so it seems to me that I shall have to live in lodgings for the natural term of my life, and that in all this wilderness of bricks and mortar which we call London, there is not a house wherein I can set my chairs and call it home. I wonder what other people do who live in Pimlico, or Bayswater, Hampstead, or Brompton? I don't hear of any special disaster happening to them on account of the wrong water company, bad drainage, or 'the clay.' But Odo Crossgraine assures me that some day I will thank him for keeping me back from certain destruction; and that people never know who are their best friends.

If Crossgraine would give his advice only when it is asked, it might perhaps be more valuable; but as he says he cannot bear to see a fine creature like myself go to the—he uses a naughty word here—for want of a restraining hand; so he makes it his business to give that hand, and to stand in the gap like a Briton. One peculiarity about Crossgraine's advice I ought to mention, which is, that it is very seldom active or positive, it is only negative. He cries out, 'Don't do this,' and 'don't do that;' but he does not say, 'do this instead;' excepting when he advises things which are utterly impracticable. He is the genius of repression not of propulsion; which, as it is easy to understand, gives one's life a Sisyphean kind of character, trying, to say the least of it. He never seems to understand one's position or its

possibilities. He told me to take a sea voyage to Australia last winter when I had my cough; but as my sole income was dependent on my work, I did not see very well how it was to be managed. He objected strongly to my sending Jackey to Dr. Swisher's at Camberwell, and urged Eton as giving the boy a better start. When I reminded him that I had nine olive branches below Jackey, of whom seven were boys all needing education sooner or later, and that my purse was as slenderly furnished as Shallow's wits, he only shrugged his shoulders, and said resignedly; 'Well, of course you must take your own way. I have merely told you, as a friend, what I consider desirable for the boy, and now I wash my hands of the whole affair.'

And when I gave my consent to my precious Maggie's marriage with Will Hopeful, he came down to my house at Loughton, and spent half a day in showing me my folly, and in prophesying woe on the young lovers. It was not that he had any tangible objection to make, or anything better to suggest; but it was in his way to oppose, and it was nothing to the purpose that his opposition was both useless and unjust.

I have known Odo Crossgraine for a great many years now; and I am sure I am very fond of him, dear old fellow, for the sake of old times, if nothing else; but I wish he would leave off his odd habit of perpetual objections, and try to run curricule sometimes. He sees the seamy side of everything, and is always foretelling disasters, contradicting opinions, opposing designs, and finding out faults. If I hold my own against him he gets huffed and out of temper; if I yield to him he breaks down suddenly midway, and leaves me stranded in the midst of an

action which he has proposed, which I have undertaken only in deference to him, and which is utterly uncongenial to my nature, and impossible to my powers. It is out of his line to guide or support. All he can do is to prevent and withstand. He is the opposition; always in opposition; and I think he would die of melancholy if the world came round to his opinion and left him nothing to oppose.

I hear that he is going out to India as the confidential adviser of some Nawab, whose name I dare not attempt to spell. The Nawab will have a hard time of it; and if he survives the mentorship of Odo Crossgraine he will have a tougher constitution than falls to the lot of most men—even strong men of the Anglo-Saxon race inured to hard knocks, winter tubbings, and the east wind.



HALL-BOOM SKETCHES. NO. 2.—A CHOICE OF PART'ERS.

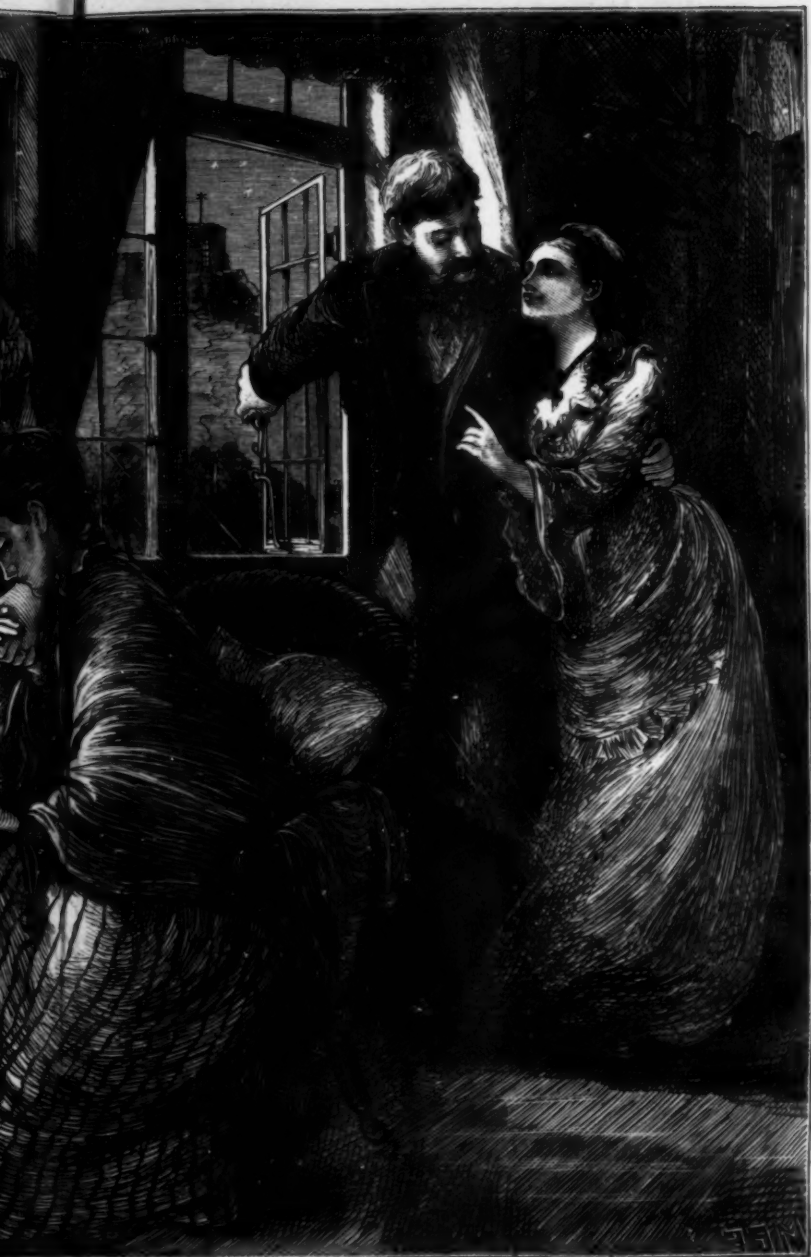




Drawn by M. E. Edwards.]

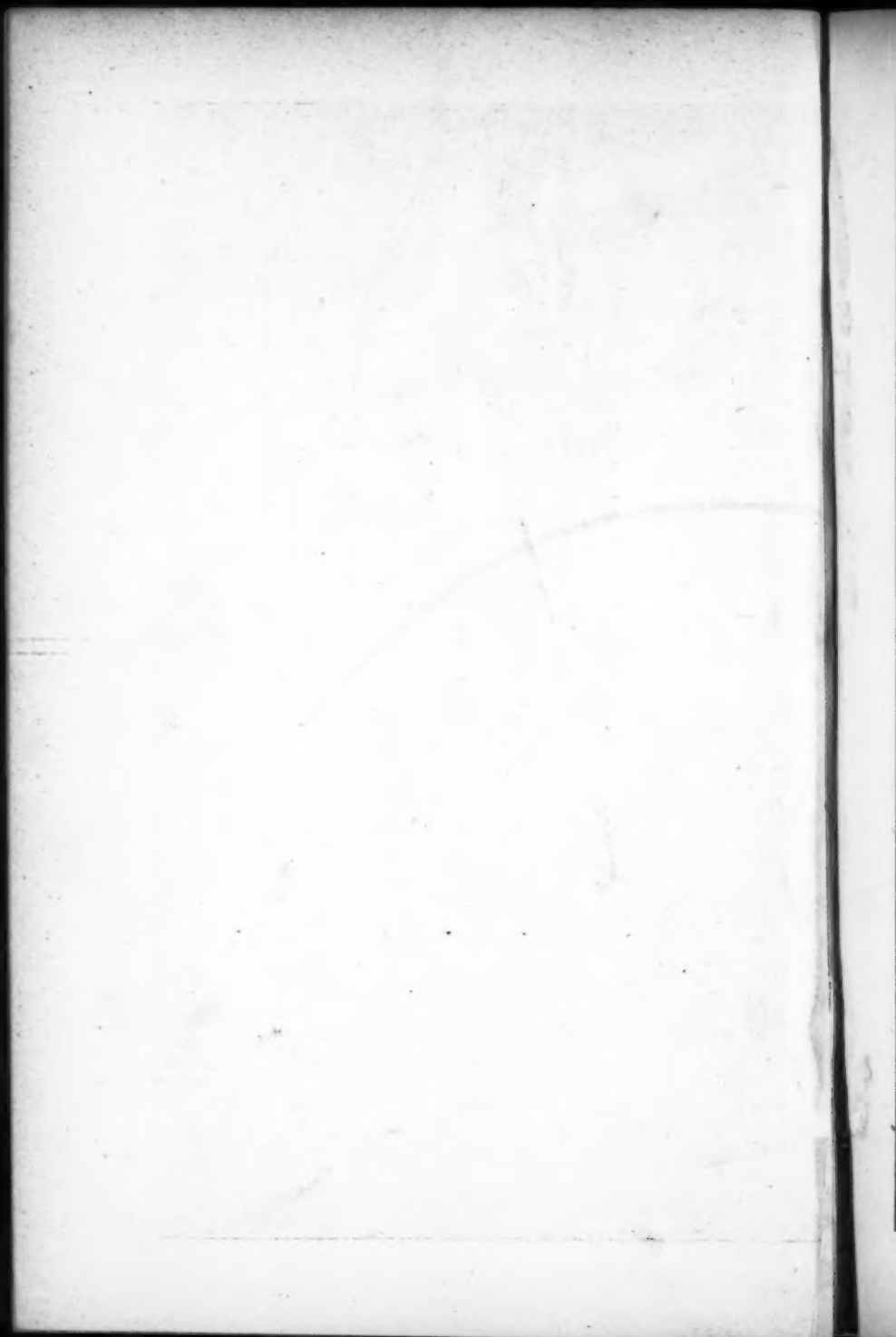
NEW YEAR'S EVE. 'RING





'RINGING OUT' THE OLD YEAR.

[See Page 49.]



# "The Bell-Ringers."

A CHRISTMAS ROUND.

Composed by MALEK ADRIEL.

The musical score is written for three voices on three staves, each in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is a simple, repetitive round. The lyrics are: "Sad - ly ring the Old Year out! Glad - ly ring the New Year in! Old Year out! Glad - ly ring the New Year in! ring the Old Year out! Glad - ly ring the New Year in!" The score includes dynamic markings such as *f* (forte) and *D.C.* (Da Capo). The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Sad - ly ring the Old Year out!

Sad - ly ring the

Sad - ly

*D.C.*

Glad - ly ring the New Year in!

Old Year out! Glad - ly ring the

ring the Old Year out! Glad - ly

New Year in!

ring the New Year in!

## TRAVELS OF YOUNG CŒLEBS.

## CHAPTER I.

## FIRST JOURNEY.

MY father, the Rev. Peter Quentín, M.A., had long been famishing on a meagre curacy, with a large family. He could, indeed, write the letters 'M.A.' after his name—an honour he had obtained at some university—but it was hard to support life on these ornaments. His true degree was F.F., which he had taken with immense distinction, and stood for 'Father o' Family.' I was one of his family.

It would not interest the reader to know the proportions of the sexes in our family, how many boys there were to the girls; it may suffice to say that I was the eldest, and it was felt that 'whatever must be done,' would have to be done with me. My father had always a worried, testy manner, and his air to strangers seemed the half-deprecatory, half-defiant bearing with which he met tradesmen who came for their money—the most constant of our visiting-list. The same tone pervaded his letters, even in replying to the rare invitation to dine, which abounded in phrases, like 'it will not be convenient for me, my dear sir, at present;' 'I trust that in a short time I shall be able;' 'I must ask your indulgence,' and the like. I found myself, however, always treated with a certain dignity, not merely as being the eldest, but as one who had a sort of patrimony, and who, on coming of age, was to come into property. My father was always giving me grave homilies on the serious responsibilities I should have to take upon myself when I came into my property. This 'property' might be summed

up in my mother's 'second cousinship' to Lord Sillopes. It was an Aladdin's lamp, which was to be handed over to me, when setting out in the world, and which I had only to rub, whenever I should be in want of friends, cash, and above all, a wife.

When I was eighteen years old, my father had to that moment pursued the lord and his connection with a steady battery of applications; which had, indeed, the effect artillery is supposed to produce, of 'silencing' the object of attack.

Suddenly arrived one morning a large, arrogant-looking letter, and dignified with 'Sillopes,' crouched, as it were, in the corner. It was a despatch from the potentate; and, wonderful to relate, actually contained a long-sought appointment! True, it was of a class that, white-elephant-like, brought expense instead of profit—a commission in one of the Line regiments, the Du Barry's Own. It was dazzling—for me, at least. Some one had, carelessly, made a present of it to our august 'connection,' who was too selfish and indifferent to think of asking for it. He was about declining it, contemptuously, when one of my father's desperate importunities—which, indeed, might have got off a criminal from a hanging-judge—arrived. He sent it on to us, with a testy, snarling letter, on the condition that 'he was not to be pestered again,' for the term of his natural life. Jubilee reigned. A good-natured aunt, whose purse was supposed, hitherto, to be about as dry and lean as her own person, unex-

pectedly showed herself a 'dear old lady,' by producing an unexpected hoard—fifty pounds—which fitted me out in the almost peacock-like uniform of the corps. It was a Highland regiment; and as I stood, with my hearse-like plumes nodding over my head, my knees and calves, for the first time in my life, all bare and chilly—it was the regulation—revealed to indiscriminate human gaze, the mixed awe and enthusiasm of the females of the household was more than justifiable. My father, however, was not in the humour for admiring my show of finery. He called me down, sternly, into his study, and, closing the door, said in his testy, worried manner—

'Get off those gewgaws; put down that *thing*—bonnet, or whatever you call it. Now, listen, sir. This is the last chance we have; and let me tell you, sir, you have only a short time to masquerade in.'

His awful manner quite scared me.

'Why, what do you mean, father?' I said. 'I shall get promotion in the regiment—rise to be colonel, perhaps —'

'Rise to be a jackass! I tell you this can't last more than a year. At this very moment, sir, you are no more than a strolling player, dressed up in your finery for the night. You have no right to those clothes, nor to the position you are going to fill. You haven't a halfpenny in the world, nor never will have.

'What is to be done, then?' I said. 'I'm sure I'll do anything.'

'First of all, look out and marry! secondly, marry! thirdly, marry! By marriage, I don't mean rushing before a clergyman, like an idiot, with a foolish chit of a girl, with whom you are in love. Any fool can do that. You *must* get an

heiress, sir,—get her within the year! For this you must eat, drink, sleep, clothe, and live. Keep that one end before you, morning, noon, and night. Every action of your life must be directed to that one end—even to the calling of a cab: and you may succeed—if you have brains, which I often doubt.' Again he repeated: 'Marry, sir!—marry, sir!—marry!'

He almost frightened me, he was so much in earnest; but, somehow, his words seemed to carry conviction.

'But how,' I said—'how am I to go about it? What have I to go on?—no fortune, no —'

'Didn't I take care of that? Haven't I given you one already?—a genteel figure and appearance.'

'Is that all? Most fellows have that,' I said, disappointed.

'Hasn't your mother given you the rest? Are you not third cousin to Lord Sillopes? Why, it is a bank note—a mine! If you only show common cleverness, it will pass you everywhere—pick the locks, force the doors—'

'Force the doors!' I repeated, in alarm.

'Of select houses; get you clothes, and food, and money, and, above all, a rich heiress! There is nothing like a bit of rank. Keep flourishing that, and you *must* succeed. Haven't I made you an officer and a gentleman, and have given you a lord to clear the way for you? At this moment you are a match for any girl in the world. If you fail, the fault is your own; and you have an entire year before you.'

This was a new revelation: and he succeeded in inspiring me with his own enthusiasm. The value of these advantages had never struck me before; and I felt that he was right. The only question was, where was the skill to make use

of them? All I wanted was courage—effrontery, the vulgar might call it; and, though hitherto of a retiring disposition, this, I felt, came from the almost rustic position in which I had been brought up. I felt a strange repugnance to facing the world, or to carrying out the daring scheme proposed by my father; but the desperation of the family affairs gave me boldness. There was, indeed, Polly Wells, a little flame of mine, at the village, the doctor's daughter, a soft, confiding creature, who had been privileged with the first private view of her lover in his glorious display of petticoats and calves, and who had been enraptured by the spectacle. To her I had really 'plighted my troth,' as the old-fashioned phrase runs, engaged my affections and 'all that sort of thing,' as my father would say. She was a dainty, trusting creature, who really believed me to be the greatest hero of my age—a pardonable exaggeration which I did not quite share with *her*. I *really* was fond of her; and I think now, if funds corresponding to my fine livery had been forthcoming—an estate or fortune, moderate, but suited to the maintenance of my clothes—I say, I really believe—though worldlings might not—that I should have held fast to her. But, under the circumstances, what was to be done? ('Under the circumstances!'—whata plank, rope, life-buoy that is—so broad in its significance, and yet so handy!) The manly, straightforward course was the best, as it always is. 'Needs must,' where one's own father drives. Duty obliges: and the Empress Josephine was obliged to sacrifice herself on a *nearly* similar occasion. I told her the obstacle, asking her to make a terrible sacrifice—which I might fairly claim of her, as it would be yet more terrible

for me. I told her to summon her resolution—that we must not even look forward to any distant period, when 'all would be well.' I said we could not dare trust to such a frail chance. Before I saw her again, I would probably 'be another's;' for that I had determined to devote myself to that one sacred purpose—carry out, unflinchingly, what was my duty; and no one should say that I was selfish, or consulted myself.

The poor little thing trembled, and turned pale; but she viewed the thing as I did. The example of the Empress Josephine encouraged her. At this distance—(she is now a round, buxom wife, her husband, a country-town practitioner, in excellent business)—it might seem cruel, but it was more merciful to use the knife, and cut well down to the bone! As I came away, miserable and dejected, I found a sort of comfort in the reflection that I had been so successful in my dismal mission. I felt a sort of inspiration, which told me that the power of carrying out what I designed—of making my fellow-creatures submit to the influence of superior power. I looked, in short, with confidence and even with impatience, to the critical mission that was before me. Something whispered me, I was destined to succeed. I was eager to be at work.

## CHAPTER II.

The act-drop must next rise at Tilston, disclosing a set-scene of that large garrison town, which had a large trade and many wealthy and luxurious inhabitants. So far, the ground was good; and, so far, Fortune favoured me, as it does the bushman or settler whose tract is thickly planted with trees and bush, the clearing of which



may entail fearful labour, but is preferable to the utter destitution of a sterile district. I already handled my axe in imagination and longed to begin. I did not think of the poor little creature who had allowed me to draw a sponge over the huge slateful of vows and protestations of eternal constancy; and, indeed, it would have been childish thinking of such things now. The slate was now clear, and I was eager to make a beginning.

Almost as I entered the town the peculiar dedication of all my faculties to the one end came into play. From the cab window I noted the number of substantial barouches and open carriages drawn by strong, well-fed, if not handsome horses, in which reclined matrons as strong and well-fed, their (generally two) daughters sitting opposite to them. These equipages had not the refined London build, or much elegance in servants, harness, &c., but they signified comfort, wealth, handsome dowries, to be given with each daughter—the father, no doubt, at that moment in his counting-house in a shabby old coat, but with a cheque-book at hand. Later, I saw these vehicles at the doors of great marts, where the matrons were ordering dresses, &c.; and as they came out, the shopmen obsequiously carrying the parcels, the mothers and daughters followed with a calm air of security, a confidence of wealth. Very different this from the nervous uncertainty—or ever ill-concealed exultation at having once more secured credit, with which purchases were made in our pettifogging little country town.

When I drove into the barracks, I went straight to the colonel—Colonel Bagshot, C.B.—and found him in his room. He was a heavy, bluff man, with stubbly, rasping

moustaches and whiskers—not unlike a pair of hard clothes brushes—and a barking voice. After a few remarks, he gave a hoarse laugh:—

‘By-the-way, I have a letter from your father, asking me to keep you under my own eye, introduce you to the women, and all that. What the deuce does he mean writing such stuff to me? I keep my lads to their work, I can tell him and you too. If you like to amuse yourself running after girls, and capering round ball-rooms, you are welcome; but let me catch you late at parade, or a single grain of pipeclay short, and I’m down on you like a hammer! What sort of a clergyman is he to be writing such nonsense?’

I was much taken back at this reception.

‘There can be no harm, sir, surely,’ I said, ‘in looking out for a companion in a virtuous, well brought up girl; at least, one of whom her parents are so fond as to reward her for her filial duty by —’

‘By leaving her all their money! Well, you *are* a queer fellow. If you’ll take a sensible man’s advice, you’ll keep clear of the women here: a set of scheming baggages who try to take in every young fellow with money. For that matter *you’re* safe enough, according to your father’s account, ha! ha!’ and he laughed a coarse laugh.

I could see he was an unsympathetic man, and not very intelligent. For it had not occurred to him that there might be in his corps a young man or two with a firm passion and resolution, against whom the ladies in the carriages might be fairly put on their guard. It would have been more to the purpose to give such advice to them. How-

ever, I said nothing, made my bow, and took my departure.

That evening I met all my new companions at the mess dinner. They were a cheerful, good-humoured set of men, and received me good-naturedly; though they were not a little free considering our slight acquaintance, which might be said to be only an hour old. But this is the way with officers. There was particularly a boisterous, fresh, over-healthy Captain Kinahan—an Irishman of some humour, whose occasional failure he made up for in spirits and loud laughter. This person seemed to enjoy great popularity; every one laughed at everything he said, and called to him from different ends of the table as 'Kin!' He seemed a good, honest, noisy fellow: but, as I said, was a little too free with me. Thus—

'Well, my dear Quen,' he began at once, 'so you have joined th' army: and how d'ye think you'll like it?'

'So far,' I said, smiling, 'I find nothing to dislike.'

'No doubt; but I mean, will it answer?' he replied grinning.

'That remains to be seen,' I answered, cautiously.

'I mean,' he said, with a knowing look, 'the purpose you have in view?'

There was a loud laugh.

'I hope so,' I said. 'I hope to acquire a knowledge of military matters. If I can reach your standard I ought to be content.' I said this because I wished to show them I had some powers of repartee.

'I'm afraid you'll find it a poor sort of land: no more than an odd matrimonial root or two to be dug up. Eh, Phillips?'

Phillips was a cold, dry officer sitting opposite, who I knew, though I did not hear what he

said, was a sneerer. He was one of the majors of the regiment.

'He may take your authority for it, Kinahan. No man has dirtied his hands more with mud, looking for roots of that kind. He can give you every information, Mr. Cœlebs.'

'Sillopes,' I corrected him, good-naturedly, 'not Cœlebs.'

'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed the colonel, loudly. 'Very good indeed! "Cœlebs in search of a wife!" That was a book we all read when I was a lad, written by some Tabby of an old maid. Very good indeed.'

From that moment they would call me Cœlibs, or 'Seclibs,' as most of them fancied it was spelled, for you may be sure there was very little hatred among the whole party.

Major Phillips, who was a sort of foraging married officer, always looking out for the best of everything—best corner, best cut of the joint, best quarters—explained to them that the word meant bachelor, and that the story 'was about a foolish young ninny who went round the world looking for a goody, goody wife.'

Never mind; I would have the laugh of them soon. I was looking for a wealthy one, which made all the difference.

Kinahan, with all his hoarse laughter and roughness, was a good-natured fellow. 'Never mind, Cœlebs,' he said; 'we all have our jokes here. The way is to hit back as hard as you are hit. Old Phillips, there, needn't talk; it's well known he was savagely bitten, and feels his leg sore still.'

'Bitten!' I said. 'How strange! And by what?'

'By his wife . . . But he wanted to bite himself. She hadn't a sixpence; but he has made her pay up many a sixpence since. But I tell you what, I am

going to the Lightbounds to-night—great people in the paraffine oil way—rolling in it—in wealth, I mean. They are giving a great ball, and they would let me bring a friend.

I was delighted. This indeed would be losing no time. 'I suppose a large family,' I said, hesitatingly. 'Boys or girls?'

'Girls, of course,' he said, with a burst of laughter. 'What do you care about the boys? Yes, there is one fine girl: but not for the likes of you and me. The mother gives out officially that she will not put simple pots, but only silver teapots, on her hob.'

I was utterly mystified by this figurative language.

'Hob! teapot! What do you mean?'

'Aristocratic vessels, sir, with handles to 'em—nots, hons., and lords. They have offered a hundred thousand down a-piece for 'em! So poor beggars like you and I have no chance. No use wasting your time. We call her the "paraffine heiress."'

I dressed myself with exceeding care, and not without some trepidation. Events were hurrying on faster than ever my fondest dreams could have hoped. Here was I on the threshold of an adventure; and I felt a sure instinct that I was about to hold my first brief in the profession my father had chosen for me. These fellows might have their rough jests, but that should not deter me; and my new friend, Kinahan, little thought that my daring thoughts were even now raised to the paraffine heiress herself. It was folly: 'waste of power' operating against little forts when there was a Mount Valerian like her before me. That very night I would trace my first parallel about her.

The scene of the ball was a magnificent detached house stand-

ing in its own grounds. Illuminated tents and pavilions were built out into the garden. There was a perfect block of carriages. We struggled upstairs, at the top of which a portly, bolster-shaped matron was standing. Her neck, as Mr. Kinahan remarked in his not very refined way, was like a hilly bit of hunting country. She was hung about with lace draperies like a boudoir window, as Kinahan said again. He introduced me, but I was received haughtily enough. Kin, who had gone off on an exploring tour, soon returned.

'She has a brace of hons. here to-night,' he said; 'that's what makes her so airified. Now that she has got the hons. she won't look at the offs.—officers—d'ye see? Did you ever see such state? The very walls daubed with paraffine. Don't you smell it? They can make the champagne of it.'

'Which is Miss Lightbound?'

I said. 'You must introduce me.'

'Rather not, Cælebs. Don't ask; she'd insult you. The whole thing is a spring-gun, set for one of these hons. No, no; excuse me.'

'What is she like? Show her to me.'

'Oh, a stiff, showy girl, stuffed with conceit. I don't see her now, there is such an infernal crowd. You must look out for yourself; and if you see any girl flourishing a fan, or giving a lecture on it to two or three, that's her. There are diamonds and jewels stuck all over it, and it cost ever so many casks of paraffine.'

'Diamonds, jewels!—all the better,' I said to myself. I should be playing with that fan before the night was over—bending over it, opening and shutting it, as I whispered soft nothings to its fair owner. I had noticed that this was a legitimate sort of agency or

go-between, which proved very useful in the intercourse. In a few minutes I saw that my bashful friend had skirted round, and made his approach to the paraffine matron, paying his court to her with an obsequiousness which contrasted meanly with his sarcastic remarks. I saw at once that he wished to keep this intimacy as a sort of 'preserve' for himself. But my turn would come by-and-by.

I wandered round the glittering rooms. Nothing could be more magnificent. A splendid band was playing for the waltz; a vast number of robust-looking girls were flying round, with, no doubt, a corresponding number of young mercantiles. I noted an obese, red-faced gentleman, in figure like a mangel-wurzel root, surrounded by a group of friends who were listening to him obsequiously.

'Yes,' he said; 'that's Foote and Chimney's band—got 'em down from London. They'll take away something out of my cheque-book in the morning. Can't be helped—my Matilda's birthday, you know. You saw the fan she has got? All these flowers, too—every leaf of 'em made the journey from Covent Garden, and not one of 'em goes back. I don't hire and make believe, as some folks do.'

All this was listened to with admiration.

'Well, Colebs, how are we getting on?' said a sharp voice at my ear. 'Not dancing? Not made a beginning yet?' It was Major Phillips.

'I have not had myself introduced,' I answered, coldly.

'Why not go in for the paraffine herself at once; it's as cheap to strike high as to strike low. I saw that forward fellow, Kinahan, dangling about her. You could do what he does.'

I was never quite sure whether this man was sneering or not; but

I could see that he was spiteful towards Kinahan.

'That's Mr. Kinahan all over,' he said. 'He keeps all "the fat" for himself. Catch him giving a friend a lift! Well, how do you like this scene of splendour? To the rustic, unsophisticated mind, it must be overpowering and dazzling.'

Again I did not know whether he was inclined to be sarcastic; but I answered, coolly, 'It seems nicely done.'

'Oh, yes, beautifully! Don't you see the streaks of petroleum in patterns on the very walls? Look at those magnificent pictures—all daubed in petroleum; those mirrors—all gilt oil. Now, to me, it's the very apotheosis of vulgarity—all these fat, coarse people, squeezing and butting against one, remind me of a cattle-show. Every moment I expect them to begin "lowing" for their fodder—impatient for their supper.'

'I wonder you came here, then,' I said.

'To get my death of cold with these draughts,' he said, putting up the collar of his coat. 'But, my dear inquisitive Corydon, you should think of Mrs. Phillips. I must entertain the poor lady after the fashion of her sex. But it is very kind of you to wonder at anything I do, or to wonder at all. The wonder of a gentleman who has so much matrimonial knowledge as you, is surely a high honour. You quite compliment me, Colebs!'

He said this very snappishly.

'I am sure,' I answered, 'I did not wish to offend you.'

'No, of course not. Oh, here comes Mother Paraffine, bearing down, mainsail set, and carrying every stitch of canvas she can spread. Charming, delightful ball, Mrs. Lightbound! Such taste! Talk of London and the West End

after this! Ah! I can see your touch in all the arrangements.'

'Oh; but it 'as so worried me, Major Phillips! You know Lightbound has no more idea of these things than he has of choosing a bonnet; so it all comes on me.'

'You needn't tell us that,' he said, with a low bow. 'By-the-way, here is a raw recruit of ours, fresh from the country, who is dying to be introduced to Miss Lightbound. I tell him it is great presumption; but he will persist.'

I felt myself colouring. The lady looked at me scornfully.

'Oh,' Tilda is too much engaged to-night. I 'aven't seen her these two hours, or, indeed, Mr. Bowdler—the Hon. Mr. Bowdler, you know.

'Ah!' said the Major, with a look of meaning, 'the poor fellow is in a sad state. It is a shame for the young lady to commit such devastation.'

'He is very nice, Major,' she said; 'so is his father, Lord Baldwin. Give me your harm, and let us look for them.'

She took his arm and passed on, without taking any notice of me. She was clearly a vulgar woman. So far, this was not very encouraging; but I could wait.

At last I came upon the heiress! She was, to my surprise, a remarkably plain girl, sitting in a corner, playing with that gorgeous fan, which was, indeed, a magnificent present. Beside her a young gentleman, with a foolish mouth, no forehead to speak of, and large fair whiskers, was sitting, who was chattering or lisping in the vernacular natural to him. I knew in a moment that he was Bowdler, the favoured Don, or Hon., as Kinahan would say. An old, meagre clergyman was standing beside them, looking on with great gratification.

Close beside me was Mrs. Lightbound, who, it struck me, was re-

garding the pair with scarcely the beaming satisfaction I had before noticed in her; and indeed—as I gave myself credit for some little discernment in affairs of this description—it struck me that the Hon. was too familiar and too careless in his manner, to be 'meaning business.' As I drew nearer, however, I could catch a few words of their conversation. He was talking carelessly of the fan.

'Yes, it is pretty.'

'But what am I to do with it?' she said. 'It is such a dreadful responsibility.'

At this moment there was a violent flapping and rustling from silk, stiff as canvas; and Mrs. Lightbound had borne down on me. I heard her mutter, 'This is a little too much!'

'You want to dance?' she said to me. 'Here, let me introduce you to Miss Lightbound. Give me the fan, dear; I and Mr. Bowdler will take care of it. Go now and dance with this gentleman.'

Was I right in my instincts? I knew it would come, and without exertion on my part, just as I had an instinct as sure that the game was in my own hands, and would be won possibly before the night was over.

I saw at once what was Mrs. Lightbound's aim. She wished to pique this Honourable Bowdler, and stimulate his admiration by rivalry. But such manœuvring old ladies are often hoisted on their own petards.

I at once asked the young lady to dance the current valse, which Foote and Chimney were winding out in the most seductive fashion. I was in my full Highland costume, and I think might fairly call myself an attractive young man. I was full of spirit. The young heiress seemed delighted and eager—enchanted—and had a sort of rustic innocence which one would

not have expected in a girl brought up in the vulgar associations of raw wealth, and the low pride of raw wealth. As we passed close to Phillips, who was talking affectionately with Kinahan—the man whom he had been just abusing—and, I suppose, still sneering at the entertainers whose supper he was presently to eat, I could not resist whispering, ‘You see, I managed the introduction without either of you,’ and motioned my head significantly in the direction of my young partner. Phillips gave me an amused stare; but the more good-natured Kinahan said, cheerily, ‘Go it Colebs, my boy.’

We danced that valse, then sat in a greenhouse, admiring the ferns; then, when Foote and Chimney struck up a quadrille, we danced that also. She told me little scraps of her history. She liked the country, and spent a good deal of her time down at the Rectory.

‘Ah!’ I said, smiling, ‘that tall clergyman that was standing beside you.’

‘Yes,’ she said. ‘He is only curate; but Mr. Lightbound has promised to exert his interest for him.’

Then I artfully brought the subject round to the Hon.

‘That Mr. Bowdler,’ I said, ‘that was monopolizing you—surely you cannot like him so much?’

‘Not in the least,’ she said, laughing; ‘and I cannot see why they are all so eager about him in this house.’

‘I am delighted to hear you say that,’ I answered, warmly. ‘I cannot tell you what pleasure that declaration has given me. Mrs. Lightbound is his great ally, of course. I can guess the reason.’

‘She is too much devoted to rank, and, I fear, would sacrifice everything to it. I hate these arrangements for marriages; it is so heartless. Don’t you, Mr. Quentin?’

‘I do indeed,’ I said, warmly; ‘and I will say this,’ I added, with meaning: ‘I should be sorry to see any one that I admired or liked sacrificed—yes, *sacrificed* to that fellow Bowdler.’

I looked at her steadily. She understood me, and coloured. The first nail was driven into the ark of that courtship. Plain as she was, she looked positively attractive, as she hung down her head and blushed.

‘But you seemed,’ I went on, ‘to encourage him. Your people encourage him. I heard it talked of all through the room—’

‘Not for the world,’ she said, eagerly; ‘it would be disloyal, ungenerous. He only comes to consult with me, as with his sister. I assure you this is the case. But why do you ask me all this? What interest can you have in any one liking poor me?’

Now was the moment. This was our fourth dance, our fourth sitting in the greenhouse. Phillips and Kinahan had often passed by with looks of secret envy: Phillips, I have no doubt, sneering to his friend. They little dreamed at what a pace matters were progressing. Mrs. Lightbound came by also, every sail set—and this was best of all—gave us an encouraging nod. When her daughter half rose timorously, asking, ‘Did she want her?’ the matron good-naturedly pressed her down, and said knowingly, ‘Don’t disturb yourself, dear.’ The tall clergyman, her uncle, came along, as if searching, then drew back hurriedly, fearful no doubt of spoiling sport. Even when the odious Bowdler—flourishing the fan, which he still unaccountably detained—came up confidentially, as if to assume his old familiar footing, he drew back, and retired, abashed at the cool reception he met. Oh, how I devoutly wished



that my poor, anxious old father could have been transported there—just for one peep—to see within, literally, twenty hours—see the amazing strides I had made.

Now, I say, was the moment. In love as in horse-shoeing, as I had heard, we should strike at a white heat, and strike at once. I did so, and answered her question. I told her why I should have that interest in her; that I loved—loved at first sight. That I had never loved before—I mean as I loved her—for I thought awkwardly of Polly). That she must forgive this suddenness, but that I was not master of myself. Neither was I. The lights, the brilliance of the scene, so unfamiliar to me; the choice wines, the new situation, the new dress in which I was clothed, all made me feel as though I was filled with some overpowering passion for the fair creature who was listening to my vows.

‘But what can you see in me?’ she said. ‘I know I have no good looks, and have nothing to recommend me.’

‘Nothing! Everything! I care not for looks’—(this, I blush to say, was the truth). ‘Without a penny I would receive you, and welcome. I am not rich myself, but—’

‘Oh, as for that,’ she said, casting down her eyes, ‘we need not think of money. But it is so sudden. What will papa say?—and, oh, how delighted Matilda will be! One thing—you cannot be jealous any more of Mr. Bowdler, you must promise me that.’

‘But,’ I said, with playful menace, ‘you must return him his fan. It is a sacrifice, I know; but we can get one twice as costly.’

‘How generous you are. But I have done so. You saw me.’

‘But I mean permanently.’ At this moment the creature himself

was passing by, a tall, handsome girl on his arm, who promised to be portly enough when she arrived at the dignity of matron. ‘Why, look at him,’ I said; ‘he has transferred his attentions already; and see! why she has got his fan now!’

‘O! you must know her,’ she said. ‘Matilda, dearest, come here a moment. I want to introduce some one to you. Oh, you must!’—for the other was giving a haughty toss of her head as though she were indifferent to the honour.

They whispered a moment. Then her face changed. ‘Oh, I am delighted!’ she said, smiling; ‘and mamma will be so glad. I must tell her at once.’

I did not quite relish this, but she was gone. ‘Who is her mamma? Why should she tell her?’

‘Don’t you know?’ said my charmer, astonished. ‘Mrs. Lightbound—the lady that introduced you to me!’

A dimness seemed to come before my eyes, a chill on my forehead. Still I could say calmly, ‘But how—that is—what relation is she to you?’

‘Cousin, of course. I thought you knew that. We came up to them for this ball.’

‘I see,’ I said, in the slow, hard tones of desperation. ‘And that old clergyman is your father, I suppose?’

‘What a strange question. Of course.—Dear Mr. Quentin, what is the matter? Have I offended you? You are not angry with me for speaking to Mr. Bowdler?’

‘Nothing, nothing,’ I said; ‘only the heat of this place. I am not accustomed to it—brought up in the country, you know.’ I was smiling in a ghastly manner, I know. ‘A few minutes with my head out of the window, or at an open door, and I shall be better.’

Besides,' I added, rather incoherently, 'I really wish to speak to the Colonel. Regimental business, you know.' And I again smiled a skull-like grin.

'Don't be long, then,' she said, in a coquettish way. 'It will be hours till you return.'

I should take good care that it would be! The tall clergyman was hovering about, no doubt scenting something. But I got away safely into the other room.

### CHAPTER III.

Here was a *début*! I plunged through the room, floundering up against the dancers, literally not knowing where I was going, or what I was doing. I saw the whole wretched story as clearly as if I had read it in a book. Oh, was there ever such a wretched blunder? To mistake a pitiful country curate's daughter—a plain, dowdy creature—for that handsome heiress! But what was to become of me? Oh, imbecility—stupidity, of the grossest, most brutish kind! After all my boasted sagacity, too.

The question was, what was to be done? There seemed no escape. It was a plot, in which they all had joined, only too glad to *fob off* their country curate's daughter on any one, without inquiry, only delighted to 'pick up' a husband. A blessed chance for them, truly. There was no possible chance of escape. What was to become of me?

I suppose my despairing face attracted him, for Kinahan was beside me.

'What's up, Cœlebs, my boy?' he said.

'Don't call me that,' I said. 'I request you will not, Mr. Kinahan.'

'I declare you don't look the

happy man they report you to be. Well, you have a queer taste! What on earth made you pick out that ugly girl when you went about it?—Something's gone wrong, my poor fellow.'

There was something good-natured in his tones, so I opened my heart to him. 'Oh, Kinahan, Kinahan, such a mess! What is to become of me? I am ruined; undone for ever.'

'So I should be,' he said, 'if I had taken up with such a tobacco-nist's head. Where were your eyes? Have you proposed to the woman?'

'Ye-es,' I faltered.

'And why, in the name of the big fiddle? O! this is too good.'

'I thought—that is, I supposed—that she was some one else.'

He looked at me a moment, then burst into a roar of laughter.

'Oh, I see! As good as a farce. Oh, you're booked, my poor fellow. The parson from the country is litigious. Action against his churchwardens; action against the lord of the manor. Cast in them all; but that is only a reason why he should try and pull up with such a good find as this. They'll hold you to it. Lightbound, the paraffine man, will give his niece five hundred pounds on the wedding day, to buy her linen. He did so before to one of her four sisters. Deuced glad they were to get it.'

'What is to become of me?' I gasped, as he painted in all these horrors.

'Come down with me, and have a glass of the Lightbound champagne. It's good. May-be we'll light on something. Then we can take a turn in the man's illuminated gardens.'

There was a sympathy and a confidence in his manner which held out a little hope. I followed him. We got into a retired corner

and had the champagne, then turned into the illuminated garden.

'This is an unlucky beginning for you, my poor Colebs—or end, for it's one as much as the other. But you were very cheeky and hoity-toity, and took airs. You deserved it richly.'

'Indeed I did,' I groaned. 'You may call me what you please; only tell me something; help me out of it. I was deceived—entrapped; and if I only was saved this once—'

'You'd never do it again. Well, you're young and inexperienced, and I feel sorry for you, so I don't mind if I try and help you out of the scrape.'

'You will!' I said, eagerly seizing his hand.

'It's infallible. At least, I saved myself by it once at the Cork ball. You mustn't lose a minute, though. Hurry back, get up a happy face, and make straight for the sister. I'll introduce you.'

'What, she has a sister here?' I said, again sinking.

'Two of them—see; plain enough to be laundresses or bathing women. They haven't danced once, I know; and by this time have grown into the mahogany of their chairs.'

'But what's the use?' I said, pettishly. 'That's only making things worse.'

'It's a desperate surgical case, and you must use the knife. Put on the young Lochinvar air; pile on the love, and after supper rapture. Fly round with the girl; pour your devotion into her ear; bring her down into the greenhouse or garden, and—propose to her!'

'Nonsense,' I said. 'A precious plan! I should get kicked, and deserve to be so.'

'You're a fool, Colebs. Follow the prescription blindly and with

spirit, and you are saved. I give you my oath and honour you are. I tell you it got me out of a worse case.'

'But I don't understand it.'

'You are not called on. But do as you like. I can't waste my time here.'

He set off. I thought a moment. I could not see what he was at; but he was a clever fellow. My position could not be worse. I ran after him.

'I'll do it,' I said.

'Another glass of paraffine,' he said.

We had two. He then led the way. We had to pass my late flame, who was looking out anxiously, and my, alas! too conspicuous and fantastic dress betrayed me even afar off. But we were hurrying on, as if to keep an appointment; or rather I tried to convey by my anxious manner, as though I had forgotten her place and was trying to find her. We came to a lonely part of the room where the two hopeless and helpless girls were sitting—josses or Indian idols blocked up behind dowagers. Mr. Kinahan invited one out, asking in a loud voice would she allow him to introduce Mr. — a—mumble in short. They had been in this sequestered solitude the whole night, cut off from the male human species. 'Now Colebs, my boy, pile up the ardour, and more power!' Will it be believed, that such was my bewilderment and hopelessness that even then I did not see the drift of his plan? But I obeyed his instructions mechanically, and with a spirit that approached desperation, I wound the ill-favoured creature in my arms, and tore round the ball-room. As we whirled, I poured a sort of strange adoration into her ear. 'I have been looking for you the whole night,' I said: 'they could not tell me where you were.'

And where *were* you? Do tell me, I have a reason.'

She was fresh from the country, far more agricultural than her sister. She was quite dazzled, too, by the flashing garb of old Gaul which I wore. At moments I thought with terror on the compound infamy of my proceedings. Kicking, indeed! It would end in the police court! At the end of the waltz I dragged her to the greenhouse to sit. 'You must do it,' I said. 'I want to talk, to tell you all I feel. I have been dancing the whole night with all sorts of partners, but not one of them comes near you: indeed they don't know how to dance.'

This was not much of a compliment, but it told.

'I have not danced once,' she said, innocently. 'I don't know any one here: indeed it is my first ball. We have sat in that corner the whole night.'

'There's a galop,' I said, starting up, for I saw the clergyman moving uneasily in the distance; 'let us rush into it. A galop is divine, and I know you galop divinely; I never met any one so light; I seem to be dancing by myself—in the air!'

These were rather broad compliments, but all told. We had another valse, when I got to telling her that she was beautiful, far more so than her sister, and after the valse was over I hurried her down to the garden. 'Let us cool ourselves here a moment,' I said. 'Oh, what a happy night this has been, and Kinahan has laid me under an eternal obligation. Listen,' I said, seizing her hand; 'I want to tell you something; I shall die if I do not, and you must hear me. These few dances seem like a lifetime. I seem to have known you for years. I have met many girls, but none like you. If I dared to tell you, on so short an

acquaintance, that I loved you, that I should esteem it the happiest moment of my life if I heard those angel lips utter that I was not indifferent to you——'

Her plain features lighted up with delight (she wore a sort of baby frock, rather soiled and trimmed with pink edgings and epaulettes, and she had no waist: my hands slipped away from it).

'Oh, I should be delighted I am sure; that is, I don't know what to say.'

But she did, and took care to let me know that she had no objection in the world.

I hurried her back to the pen in which she had been sitting, and rather roughly got her safe into her old enclosure again. She said she wished to go to papa, but with a smile I said, 'Better leave it to me: I'll bring him back to you.' I got away, then turned to look for Kinahan. I felt like a villain: to-morrow night I was quite prepared to pass in a police-cell.

But the ball was now beginning to thin. I ought to have mentioned that this paraffine palace was so spacious and magnificent that it took a long time to get round through the various rooms opening into each other, the boudoirs, alcoves, greenhouses, tents, &c., which were all *en suite*. There were two great dancing-rooms, while Foote and Chimney 'blared' away in a gallery put up for the occasion. The dancing was at one end of the house, and the room where I found my last flame was quite at the end of the house, and seemed to be set apart for incapable girls and superannuated dowagers. But I soon found Kinahan in the supper-room.

'It's done,' I said abjectly, 'and it's your doing.'

'But did you follow my instructions?'

'To the letter,' I groaned.

'It's a shame,' I added, in a sudden rage, 'to take advantage of a fellow in this way. It's shabby, infernal shabby. I see, it's one of your tricks to make them laugh at the mess.'

'But tell me, did you really pop—'

'Yes, yes.'

'Come along, then,' he said; 'let's get home at once. Don't stay another second. I tell you you must, so where's your cloak? Here's a cab, get in. Drive away.'

I just saw the tall clergyman, without his hat, making frantic protest on the steps.

'Too late, my boy,' said Kinahan. 'My dear Cœlebs, you're safe, but let it be a lesson to you.'

I could not see it yet.

'Wait till we get to your room,' he said. 'I won't tell you a word about it till then.' Then, after a long silence—

'Well, well, Cœlebs! you've opened the season brilliantly. Why couldn't you ask—or make sure, that you had the right sow—I mean young lady—by the ear?'

'What *was* I to do?' I said piteously; 'they were all talking of the jewelled fan, and she had it in her hand; and, so I thought—But tell me, *do* you think anything can be done?'

We were now at my rooms. He sat down at the fire, lit one of my cigars, put another into my mouth, and smoked on for half-an-hour without saying more than a stray monosyllable or two. I did not care much, for I was thinking of the terrible *denoûment*. The tall clergyman would call the first thing in the morning; or, probably a long brother—a barrister, or in one of the public offices—and then there would be a scene. I

had insulted not one but both his sisters. Should I write a note that might throw myself on their good sense, till I could make affidavit before any magistrate that I had not a halfpenny in the world. I did not care about the laughter and pitiful jokes of my friends, so that I escaped.

It was striking four when Kinahan got up. 'Finished your cigar,' he said? 'Well, you're out of the scrape by this time. I congratulate you. Let it be a warning to you.'

'This is mere nonsense,' I said, impatiently. 'I'm tired of the joke.'

'By this time,' he said, 'the parson and girls have got together. The girls have fallen on each other, and are near pulling their long back hair which they have let down. Each is surely convinced that you were sober with *her*: but one is a set off against the other. They'll be off by the morning train, afraid to face the gossips here, and more afraid of the great Mrs. Lightbound, who would not like any ridicule to attach to her great ball. No Cœlebs: you'll never hear a word more about it, except, of course, from *us*.'

I wrung his hand in joy and wonder. 'You are a second Tallyrand,' I said. I saw by instinct that he was right, and I *was* saved. I never *did* hear anything of the matter, though I was nervous until the next day had passed over. How immeasurably relieved I was when I heard that they had gone away. The story, of course, was over the whole place, but shall I confess it? I was not displeased at the result. It added to my *prestige*, but it made the name 'Cœlebs' adhere to me persistently.

(To be continued.)

## CHRISTMAS IN A DISPENSARY.

THE snow lay thickly over the ground and upon the house-tops—*could* be a very nice way to commence my Christmas story. But as fiction must have a colouring of truth, it would be absurd of me to utter so false a statement as the above—at least as far as *our* town is concerned. We have seen very little of the article for some years past, and then only in a diluted form, which would not be pleasant to introduce into a story. It would seem as if old King Christmas had sold a large quantity to theatre managers, and had but a small pile left, which he must use economically. However, this subject of the snow is open to discussion. Meanwhile, I shall go on to state that on last Christmas Day it fell to my lot to be on duty at the North-east Dispensary, in the good old town of L—. I was then surgeon to that institution, having two most agreeable gentlemen as my colleagues. Christmas morning! The sky was blue, the sun was bright, the air was keen, the ground was hard—in fact, the weather was beautiful for the time of year.

‘Just the morning,’ cried Dobbs, ‘for a nice long walk, which will brace us up, and give us an appetite for the goose on Jack Doose’s table!’

‘Yes,’ said Buryhan, throwing himself into a military attitude, to which he was partial, and putting up his rimless eyeglass to look at me; ‘and I hope Alf Adams won’t have too much work while we are away.’

Alf Adams, the reader’s humble servant, smiled a smile seldom to be observed. Silently he watched his two companions muffle themselves in overcoats of alarming dimensions, and, being ready, dis-

appear for the remainder of the day and evening. I stood at the window, watching the stream of human beings gaily trooping along. The bells of the various churches pealed forth; but their merry music, instead of making my heart full of joy, only drove me half wild to think I was fastened up in that gloomy place, while my own family were living and making merry not quite half a mile from me, and I dare not go to see them! No surgeon could be got for love or money to take my place for half an hour. One thing might have enlivened the hours: I had a present of a turkey, sent me from the Green Isle, which, with a small plum pudding, was to be my dinner. So I had invited Jack Bryden to help me to eat it. But, alas! my bosom friend and school-fellow could not muster courage to enter my den on such a day. So I sat down to my solitary meal, railing at the whole world, and particularly at that smart young man, Jack Bryden. I believe I was very ill-tempered over my dinner. The turkey was pretty good; but the servant had a look on her face of pity for me and satisfaction for herself as to the good things in the kitchen. I therefore concluded she had been drinking.

The pudding was brought in, but what was my horror to find it smelt of brandy! Fully half a glass of brandy had been put upon it! Now, I ask any one, had that girl any right to act thus to me, when she knew very well that I was a perfect teetotaller? Her reason was found out afterwards—I blamed the poor girl for half a glass—when in three days a bill for *six* glasses was presented from a neighbouring publichouse! Of



course the servant declared she had put all the brandy on the pudding, which was about the size of my two fists; and I assure you, ladies, they are but small. After my lonely dinner, I drew the large arm-chair to the fire, which I stirred into a blaze, and lighting my pipe (for I smoke if I don't drink), I began gazing abstractedly at the picture of the grandfather of a late surgeon to the institution, which had not been removed from over the chimney-board. But the grim old patriarch seemed to enjoy my discomfort so much that I started up in disgust, and once more sought the window. There they go, the merry crowd, laughing and chattering, although every nose was in danger of frostbite.

Four wedding coaches dashed past, lest they be late for the church, but I also saw one coach which went slowly along, and it recalled the lines of a very sentimental friend, who once wrote an 'Ode to Christmas'—

'The wedding coach was busy,  
And the hearse was busy too.'

I was about to moralize on this point, when the porter, dressed in his Sunday suit, knocked, to say there was a case in the surgery. I went down, to find a nice young man in 'delirium tremens,' who requested a draught, and glad I was to get him out, lest he might do me an injury; for persons in his state have a peculiar way of polishing one off if the chance presents itself.

There is never more drunkenness in L— than on Christmas Day; not only because it is a day of rejoicing, but because so many take pledges not to drink from a given time 'till Christmas Day.' So I expected to have plenty of cases about twelve o'clock that night, when friendship would have

had time to merge into hostility, with broken heads as the result.

During the afternoon I had cases dropping in, of various sorts. But I was called out to visit one person, whose state was most pitiable. A female lying on an old dirty sack, weak and ill: two children playing about the floor of the squalid room. Where was your 'merry Christmas' for that poor mother? Her husband dead; she too ill to work; phthisis hurrying her away ere the year went out. Two shillings a week, forsooth, from the parish, and this a 'merry Christmas!' No matter, the children will be sent to the industrial schools, and their mother, quietly reposing in her parish coffin, will have a 'happy new year,' and never feel sorrow more.

Once more in my sitting-room. The shades of evening have deepened; the wind begins to sigh round the house, down the chimney, and through the key-hole; so I have the gas lit, the fire stirred up again, and order tea.

Just as I was beginning my evening meal, the door opened softly. Then there was a pause, as if some one was examining me through the space formed by the hinges.

'Come in!' I cried.

A face appeared at the door, and the eyes having examined the room generally, and me particularly, the remainder of the body followed, and then I saw the form of a man I had twice met before.

Staring at me in a wild manner, he said, 'How do? Don't you know me? Don't you remember me telling you that I should come to tea some evening? Your man downstairs wasn't going to let me in; but I gave him a farthing rolled up in paper, and said I was a most particular friend of yours. He will think I gave him a sovereign.'

At this the being uttered a series of horrid chuckles, and rolled his eyes about in a most alarming manner.

The first time I met this person was at an hotel, where he was capering about, singing and reciting, and then going round the room with his hat for coppers. I was told by a gentleman that he was a harmless lunatic.

The second time I met him, I was hurrying along on business. With the most unfortunate want of forethought, I nodded to him and passed on. In a second he was by my side, and, tapping me smartly with his forefinger, cried—

‘Do you know me, sir?’

‘Yes,’ I answered, smiling, and attempting to walk away; but, preventing me, he said—

‘What’s my name?’

‘Richey,’ I said, with a half-frown; but his antics made me smile, for he kept skipping about from one side of me to the other.

‘You’re a medical man, I think,’ then said he; ‘and I have seen you go into the North-east Dispensary; now I am a medical man also.’

This I knew to be untrue. And upon giving him a look which conveyed my doubt, he quickly added, ‘That is, I am a chemist; I am going to write up for my papers. I am at present in the literary line, and I assure you I am heartily sick of it.’ These last words given with emphasis. Now I knew what his literary line was. If going about the hotels with six old—very old—Bradshaw’s Railway Guides, and offering them for sale as belonging to the present month, is anything in the ‘literary line,’ then he was in that business.

‘I must go now,’ said I, feeling that the eyes of the passers-by were on me; ‘I have a most important case to attend.’

‘Very well,’ he answered. Then

taking off his hat, and holding it towards me, said, ‘Will you “toss me,” to see if I shall give you a penny, or you give me one, for I want a glass of—’

‘Oh, here’s a penny for you!’ I cried; ‘good-bye.’

‘Will you take me home to tea with you?’ he persisted.

‘No,’ I cried. ‘Perhaps I’ll see you to-morrow.’ For I wished to leave him, as quite a crowd of giggling persons had collected.

‘No,’ he murmured, in a melancholy manner, as if he had been deceived in that way before; ‘no, not to-morrow; do not say “to-morrow;” but I shall come to tea some evening—to tea some evening.’

And now, this Christmas evening, he came to fulfil his promise, which had never been exacted from him by me.

‘Richey’—for this was the name he went by—was below the middle height, but evidently very strong and active; indeed, it struck me that I should not like to have a tussle with him. He had the most extraordinary talent for imitation: indeed he appeared to be constantly imitating somebody. His general accent was that of a ‘heavy swell’ to be seen on a concert-room stage. But it would change, as the ideas passed through his mind, to imitations of Toole, Buckstone, and local actors. As he spoke he threw himself into most strange and ludicrous attitudes.

As he stood before me, I noticed a parcel under his arm. I could not understand what it was. He kept taking it from under his arm and putting it into his hat, then taking it from that and returning it to its original position.

After capering about the room, looking at the pictures, he suddenly stopped short to ask me in a whisper, with mock alarm, if

'the gentleman over the chimney-board was my father.'

Then taking off his hat, in an assumed attitude of humility he held out his clasped hands, muttering his awe and respect for 'such a noble person—such a forehead—mouth—nose—such eyes, &c.'

'Well,' thought I, 'this fellow begins to amuse me;' I felt rather glad he came.

So I pulled the bell-rope for another cup, and when it came, I asked him, rather pleasantly, to draw over his chair.

I may here remark that while the servant was in the room he sat down very quietly, his large, staring eyes fixed on her face with a look of intense admiration for her beauty, always keeping the mysterious package, however, vacillating between his armpit and hat. As soon as she left the room, he began imitating the 'Artful Dodger,' when he gives his dislocating twist of the head, and glanced at the door.

'Do you know, I like girls. No matter what their station be. I fell in love with a nice young lady once. We met, 'twas in a bar; but the manager's eye was upon me. He discovered that I was trying to "toss her" for a glass of ale, so—he! he! kicked me out! He did!'

He changed his subjects so quickly, that I soon was obliged to become dumb, with the exception of a monosyllable now and then.

Thus some hours passed merrily. At length he jumped up and skipped round the room. Suddenly stopping at the sideboard, he opened it quickly, to see if anything was inside. Immediately he dived his hand in and skipped round the room with a bottle of Dobbs' whiskey in his hand. This had been a Christmas

present to Dobbs. What would Dobbs say? Of course he would say that I had broken the pledge with it! Oh, it must be rescued! But, no, I could not persuade my volatile visitor to put it down—force would be dangerous. So I leaned back helplessly in the chair.

'Now, sir,' cried he, knocking off the head of the bottle, and pouring out a quantity into a tumbler taken from the sideboard, 'I shall drink your health! A toast to my most noble friends, which are yourself and our noble grandfather over the chimney-board! Here's to him, as the old year going out; and here's to you, the new year coming in.' Here he rambled off into a lot of nonsense. The whiskey soon began to fire his brain. Just then the porter called me down to a case. To him I mentioned that I had a queer fellow upstairs, and that if I pulled the bell-rope he was to come up at once—not that I feared danger, but there was no knowing what might happen. I came up the stairs to my room with a full determination to get rid of my strange friend as quickly and quietly as possible. When I entered, I found him dressed with the table-cloth round his shoulders, hanging like a toga. His eyes were like blazing coals as he stole towards the door, turned the key, and removed it from the lock. 'Now,' cried he, 'I shall tell you who I really am. I am the Evil Spirit of Christmas! Long have I roamed the earth, and until now I have not had one victim. The time has at length arrived. This shall indeed be a "merry Christmas" to me.'

I laughed, and said, 'Very well acted indeed.'

'Acted? I am in earnest!'

Here he produced, to my alarm,

a long dissecting-knife, which he had taken from an open case (for we kept those instruments upstairs). I saw that the drink had carried away what little sense the wretched man ever had, but I thought a bold front would quiet him. So I laughed, and said, 'Now, my dear sir, do sit down, and——'

'Never! Blood I must have!'

'The bell,' I thought, and turning quickly. Good heavens!—*the bell-rope was cut high up!* I felt faint; but with an effort I rallied; and snatching up the poker, I cried, 'Look here! if you don't stop this nonsense instantly, I shall smash you with this!'

The maniac roared with fiendish laughter as he cried, 'I am a spirit! your weapon will go through me as through air!'

There he stood, glaring on me, a remorseless maniac!

Oh! how I prayed that the door-bell might ring, and that the porter might announce a patient. How sweet would be the sound—like angel-melody to my heart! But no; cases were but few at present. Oh, that I had told John to follow soon after me!

'Prepare! Thy doom is come!' cried the madman, as he drew towards me. I stood behind a chair, with the poker firmly clutched in my left hand. Suddenly he rushed at me, catching my blow upon his arm, and seizing me by the throat. Fortunately I caught the wrist of the arm that held the knife—that long, sharp instrument glittering in the gaslight. I raised my voice, and cried, 'Help! help!' But the wind, which had now risen to a storm, drowned my voice; besides, in that long, rambling house I

could only be heard outside the door. The maniac at length got a firm hold of my throat; but just before he did so I gave one loud piercing shriek of 'Murder!' Then my eyes seemed forced out of my head; my brain was on fire; the membranes of my ears seemed bursting; and—I remembered no more!

\* \* \* \* \*

When I revived I found myself in bed, with Buryham and Dobbs standing by me.

'All right, old boy!' cried Dobbs; 'you are better now.'

At first I thought I had been dreaming; but as the remembrance came back in all its horrors, I shudderingly asked, 'How did I escape?'

'Dobbs and I came home earlier than usual,' Buryham replied. 'When we came in the porter told us you had a very queer fellow with you, and mentioned what you had said to him. We hurried upstairs, tried the door, but found it fastened. We then heard your cry of "murder!" So, without more ado, we burst open the door—and, by Jove! we were only just in time, as the madman was turning you round to drive the knife into your heart! However, he is safe enough now. By this time he is lying in the padded chamber of the workhouse.'

I pressed both their hands, and the tears silently rolled down my cheeks. Since then I have been very select in my company; and whenever I see a man of eccentric character, I feel a cold shudder creeping through my anatomy as I remember the horrors of that 'Christmas in a Dispensary.'

DR. SALUCAS.

## ABOUT CATS.

'**D**IED, in Southampton Row, Bloomsbury, Mrs. Gregg, a single lady, between fifty and sixty years of age, remarkable for her benevolence to cats, no fewer than eighty being entertained under her hospitable roof at the same time . . . . . Her maids being frequently tired of their attendance on such a numerous household, she was reduced at last to take a black woman to attend upon and feed them.' She left this sable attendant an annuity, conditional on the due care and sustenance of the cats.

So said Sylvanus Urban, eighty years ago. And there have been other cases nearly similar: such as that of a gentleman at Hackney, who earned for himself the soubriquet of Cat Norris, on account of the numerous cats which he cherished. Grimalkin once now and then attracts a spurt of popular attention; and it is perhaps right that it should be so, for he appears to have had a good many hard rubs to bear. If Cattle Shows, Horse Shows, Pigeon Shows, Poultry Shows, Bird Shows, and Dog Shows—even Baby Shows and Barmaid Shows—why not Cat Shows? If people persist in doubting whether there has ever been such a being as a tortoiseshell tom cat, why should not others try to answer the question in the affirmative? If Persian cats are shorter in the back and longer in the legs than others, why should we not know it? Did a cat ever live twenty-six months without drink? and has a cat ever been known to exceed thirty years of age? and was there not a remarkable police-court case lately, touching the personal identity of a white Persian cat? If we like such subjects, have we not a right to discuss them?

The tortoiseshell problem is one of the toughest relating to cats. Every one admits that the combination of red and yellow in the male animal, if observable at all, is very rare; and the rarity gives rise to a high commercial value—just as in the case of old pictures, old china, and uniques of various kinds. Some breeders have found that, cross how they might, they can never produce this phenomenon; if tom, then a few black or white hairs mixed with the yellow and red; if no black or white, then tom's sister, perhaps, but not tom. Some persons have suspected, and even asserted, that nitrate of silver is occasionally used to sophisticate the colour of tom's coat. There was once a tortoiseshell cat named Dick; but the animal lost both name and fame on becoming the mother of a litter of kittens. The 'Times' newspaper has not been without its allusions to this subject. In one issue there was an announcement: 'A handsome Tortoiseshell Tom Cat to be disposed of on reasonable terms.' In another: 'To be sold, a real Tortoiseshell Tom Cat, fifteen months old, and eight pounds weight;' and diligent readers of the paper could doubtless find other examples. About sixty years ago there was one of these rarities sold by auction in London, and fetched such an enormous price as to become quite a public topic. Mr. Bannister, the comedian, made fun about it in an entertainment called the 'Budget,' while song-books and broadsheets revelled in the song of 'The Tortoiseshell Tom Cat,' or (in another form), 'Tommy Tortoiseshell.' The song puts the Cat into a Catalogue issued by Mr. Cats-eye of Cateaton Street; and brings in

the syllable *cat* in plentiful abundance. Men, as well as women, it seems, helped to run up the biddings to more than two hundred guineas:—

'E'en nine or ten fine gentlemen were  
in the fashion caught as well  
As ladies in their biddings for this  
purring piece of tortoiseshell!

Four other lines ran thus—

'Of its beauty and its quality 'tis true  
he told us fine tales;  
But as for me I would as soon have  
bought a cat-o'-nine-tails.  
I would not give for all the cats in  
Christendom so vast a fee  
To save them from the cataracts or  
Cataline's catastrophe!

Not only the tortoiseshell, but the yellow, and also the tri-coloured, are subject to the same problem: are there any toms included in the number? Again, white cats are reputed to be always deaf and dumb; but some possessors assert that their *protégés* are as wide awake as any other cats. Again, there is the problem about tails. We all hear of the flagellatory cat-o'-nine-tails; but are there any cats wholly without such appendages? There are, unquestionably, cats in the Isle of Man thus bereft; and hence the saying, that 'Manx cats are tailless;' but whether a cat once lost her tail by accident, and thus established a new breed, or whether (as has been rumoured) crafty and cruel rogues sometimes curtail poor puss, in order to obtain a high price for a so-called Manx cat, are matters open for discussion.

According to Pennant, King Howel laid down a good stiff value for cats in Wales nine hundred years ago: 'The price of a kitling before it could see was to be a penny; till it caught a mouse, twopence;' provided the little one passed a good examination by certain tests. 'If any one stole or killed the cat that guarded the

prince's granary, he was to forfeit a milch ewe, its fleece, and lamb; or as much wheat as when poured on the cat, suspended by its tail (the head touching the floor), would form a heap high enough to cover the tip of the tail.'

Pussy has unquestionably been a favourite with many persons. Witness Mrs. Gregg and Cat Norris; and witness Richard Robert Jones, an eccentric who died in 1826, and who kept copies of all the pictures and all the verses he could meet with about cats. One of Gray's lighter minor poems, his 'Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat,' gives a pleasant picture of a well-fed and well-treated puss:

'Her conscious tail her joy declared;  
The fair round face, the snowy beard,  
The velvet of her paws,  
Her coat that with the tortoise vies,  
Her ears of jet and emerald eyes,  
She saw—and purr'd applause.'

She was looking at her own reflected image in a stream; she saw two fish swim by, and dipped down her paw to catch them; but overtopped, fell into the water, and was drowned.

On the other hand, some persons have a great antipathy to cats. Such is said to have been the case with Napoleon. A story is told that, after his brilliant victory at Wagram, and while temporarily sojourning at the humbled Emperor of Austria's palace at Schönbrunn, he one night called out hastily in his bedroom for assistance. An equerry or aide-de-camp entered, and found his potent master half-undressed, agitated, perspiring, and dealing intended blows at something or other. In truth, a cat had secreted herself behind some tapestry hangings in the room, and Napoleon was making desperate lunges at her through the hangings, almost as much in terror as puss herself.

But the modes of making use of



a cat as a symbol, metaphor, representative, or type, are much more varied than the actual show either of fondness or aversion; although, it must be confessed, puss is seldom complimented on these occasions. As to the signs of taverns, such as the 'Salutation and Cat,' 'Cat and Bagpipes,' and 'Cat and Fiddle,' much conjecture has been hazarded concerning their origin, but without any very definite result. Some of the learned say that 'Cat and Fiddle' comes from 'Catan Fidèle'—faithful Catherine; but this leaves unexplained our old familiar,

'Hey diddle diddle,  
The cat and the fiddle,' &c.

Not less difficult is it to trace the origin of certain old saws and sayings—such as this, that if you butter a cat's feet, she will become domesticated in your house; or this, that if a cat sneezes or coughs, every person in the house will soon catch cold. Then, what is the meaning of 'Cat's cradle,' that wonderful see-saw of thread or string in which children delight, and which they often call 'Scratch cradle?' Some think that it ought to be 'Cratch cradle,' cratch being still a name for the hay-rack over the manger in a stable; and that it was associated, in mediæval times, with some rude semblance to the Holy Manger; if so, cats have evidently nothing to do with the matter. The old saying that 'Cats suck the breath of infants, and so kill them,' is sometimes attended with discomfort to puss, who is hurried away from the soft surroundings of baby, lest she should verify the proverb. Why is a particular game called Cat? No one knows. It has something of cricket, something of trap-ball, but is neither; what we know is, that the little bit of wood called

the Cat is troublesome to passers-by. The term Gib-cat, once applied to tom, is supposed to have come from Sibert, familiar for Gilbert; but this does not help us much, for it leaves unexplained why a tom cat should be called Gilbert. Then there is the simile, or standard of comparison, known as the Kilkenny cats, implying mutual destruction: the story being that two cats belonging to that locality fought so long and so fiercely that nothing was left but a bit of one tail. A Kilkenny man, within the last few years, has expressed an opinion that the saying had an origin which had nothing to do with cats. Many generations ago, there were two distinct municipal or corporate bodies in that city, called respectively Kilkenny and Irish-town; the boundaries of their jurisdictions had never been marked out or clearly defined; they were at litigation on the subject for nearly three hundred years, until both were nearly ruined by law expenses.

Nobody knows why a particular kind of whistle is named a cat-call. Addison, in his humorous and sarcastic essay on this subject, in the 'Spectator,' contrives to glide from cat-calls to cats. 'A Fellow of the Royal Society, who is my good friend, and a great proficient in the mathematical part of music, concludes, from the simplicity of its make, and the uniformity of its sound, that the cat-call is older than any of the inventions of Jubal. He observes, very well, that musical instruments took their first rise from the notes of birds and other melodious animals. "And what," says he, "more natural than for the first ages of mankind to imitate the voice of a cat, that lived under the same roof with them?" He added, that the cat has con-

tributed more to harmony than any other animal; as we are not only beholden to her for this wind instrument, but for our string music in general.'

Art-connoisseurs are acquainted with a picture by Breughel called the 'Cats' Concert,' in which about a dozen cats are assembled before an open music-book; the music, as is denoted by a small sketch, is a song about mice and cats; most of the cats are singing, with humorously varied expressions of countenance; one is blowing a horn or trumpet, one wears spectacles, and two or three are beating time with a front paw. Something approaching to this was actually attempted at one time at Paris; a Cat Concert, or 'Concert Miaulant,' was got up, in which several cats were placed in a row, with a monkey as conductor; when he beat time they mewed, the drollery depending chiefly on the different tones and qualities of the cats' voices. Whether it is the voice, or the manner, there is something that has tempted the more spiteful class of satirists to liken women to cats. For instance, Huddesford, who, in the early part of the present century, wrote a 'Monody on the Death of Dick, an Academical Cat,' launches out into this diatribe against various kinds of women:—

'Calumnious cats, who circulate <sup>poor</sup> false  
And reputations maul with mard'rous  
claws;  
Shrill cats, whom fierce domestic brawls  
delight;  
Cross cats, who nothing want but teeth  
to bite;  
Starch cats, of puritanic aspect and;  
And learned cats, who talk their hus-  
bands mad;  
Cofounded cats, who cough, and crow,  
and cry;  
And maudlin cats, who drink eternally;  
Fastidious cats, who pine for costly  
cates;  
And jealous cats, who catechise their  
mates;

Cat-prudes, who, when they're asked  
the question, squall,  
And ne'er give answer categorical;  
Uncleanly cats, who never pare their  
nails;  
Cat gossips, full of Canterbury tales;  
Cat grandames, vexed with asthmas  
and catarrhs;  
And superstitious cats, who curse their  
stars !'

A more pleasant bit of fun, with which Thomas Hood enriched his 'Comic Annual,' is a letter supposed to be written by one Thomas Frost to the Secretary of the Horticultural Society, revealing a most unexpected value of dead cats in gardening. 'I particularly wish the Society to be called to consider the Case what follows, as I think might be maid Transactionable in the nex Reports. My Wyf had a Tomb Cat that dyd. Being a torture Shell, and a Grate faverit, we had him berried in the Guardian, and for the sake of inrichment of the Mould I had the Carke deposited under the roots of a Gozberry Bush. The Frute being up to then of the Smooth Kind. But the next Seson's Frute after the Cat was berried, the Gozberries was all hairy—and more Remarkable the Catpilars of the same Bush was All of the same hairy discription.'

The instinct of the cat has not escaped the attention of naturalists. Every one agrees that the dog is far more intelligent, faithful, unselfish—attached to his master by something more than mere cupboard love. Still there are occasional instances of puss coming forward as a thinking being, laying plans, and adapting means to ends. As to cats suckling the young of other species of animals, this may possibly arise from some kind of maternal yearning, not simply such as we might call kindness of motive. At Guildford, some years ago, a boy

brought indoors a couple of blind young rabbits; the father, rather brutally, gave them to a cat, under the supposition that she would summarily treat them as rats; instead of which, she suckled them and took care of them. At Overton, in Hampshire, a cat suckled her own kitten and a squirrel at the same time. In White's 'Natural History of Selborne' an incident is related of a cat who had been robbed (in a way familiarly known to most households) of her kittens, nursing a young leveret which had lost its mother: the marvel to Gilbert White was that a carnivorous animal should thus suckle one of the graminivorous order. At Woodbridge, in Suffolk, a hen died, leaving two eggs to bemoan their loss. The eggs were placed under a cat when suckling her kittens; the warmth hatched the eggs, the chicks came forth, and the cat looked after them as attentively as after her own kittens.

Poor puss sometimes looks as though she would, if she could, tell her troubles to those around her. A kitten died one day, a natural and not a violent death; the cat brought it indoors in her mouth, laid it at her mistress's feet, and moaningly looked up for succour and sympathy. The instinct of dogs, in finding their way to places under circumstances which would baffle their masters, is paralleled in one instance, if not in many, by the cat. A certain puss had her kitten taken away from her, put into a basket, and carried three miles off, to the other extremity of a large town. Puss disappeared some time afterwards; but when the street door was opened early next morning, in she composedly walked, with her kitten dangling from her mouth, and replaced it on her own particular cushion. How she

had managed her night journey no one knew. A child six years old ran a splinter in his foot, sat down on the floor, and cried so lustily as to wake a cat who was sleeping by the fireside; the cat got up, went to the child (who was a playmate of her's), gave him a good hearty cuff on the cheek with her paw, returned to the fireside and resumed her nap, as if under the belief that the unusually loud crying was merely the result of 'tantrums.' A cat belonging to a convent received her food only when the bell was rung at meal times. One day she happened to be shut out at this critical period. On gaining admission, an hour or two afterwards, she saw no trace of any allowance on her platter; whereupon she set the bell ringing, much to the astonishment of the establishment generally. The 'Scotsman' newspaper, in 1819, told an anecdote of a cat that was left on shore by mere accident, much to the regret of the shipmaster. When he returned to Aberdour from his voyage, about a month afterwards, puss at once walked on board with a kitten in her mouth, and went directly down to the cabin. It was ascertained that she had lived in a neighbouring wood, coming to have a peep at all the vessels that entered the harbour, but paying no further attention to any except the one which she regarded as her home. And here we may remark that there is said to be a law or rule that if a live cat is found in an abandoned ship, it will prevent the vessel from being treated as derelict, or the property of the finder. If it be so, the rule probably applies to other live animals besides cats; at any rate, it is known that shipowners and shipmasters like to have a cat on board. One more instance of

thought, sagacity, or whatever we may call it. A certain pantry window in the country was frequently found to be broken, and was as frequently mended; to guard it, a board was nailed across the lower part of the sash. One night the master of the house, when in bed, heard taps against the pantry window, just below him. On looking out he saw a cat with her (or his) hind feet on the pantry sill, the left front paw clinging to the top edge of the board as a holdfast, and hammering away against one of the panes of glass with a small stone held in the right paw.

There is some justification for the belief that a new career of honour is opening for puss. Cat shows are likely to become institutions among us. When the Crystal Palace folk entered upon this matter half a year ago, there were no data from which the probable degree of success could be inferred. It was not known whether the owners of fine or rare cats would submit them to public view. But they *did*; and the display was a success. The famous question of questions was not quite solved. There was a tortoiseshell tom, but it was admitted that he had a few white hairs about him. People flocked in very large number to the north nave of the Palace, where the cats were ranged in cages; and newspapers and family circles were, for a week afterwards, discussing the merits of the Duchess of Sutherland's British wild cat, the white Per-

sian cats, the blue-eyed deaf cats, the Siamese cat with the puppy pug-like nose, cats without tails, cats with superabundant toes, cats with less than the proper number of toes, cats weighing more than 21 lbs. each, cats with the brown tabby coat, so rarely seen. And so this first Cat Show having been a success, a second was determined on; and still more decidedly is pussy now in favour than before. The cats were vastly more numerous; and so were the visitors. No fewer than 349 mewling, purring beauties competed for public admiration and favour, reclining pleasantly on their cushions. The animals were grouped in forty classes, and three prizes were given in each class: so that about every third exhibitor had a prize, of course much to his or her satisfaction. The short-haired and the long-haired were duly classified; while the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals offered prizes for choice examples of workmen's cats. Good; kindness to animals ennobles a dustman and a duke alike. The brown, blue, and gray tabbies were in strong muster; the rare mauve colour was present; the Australian and the Abyssinian had not been forgotten; there was a cream colour, which the enraptured owner valued at 100*l.*; there were 20 lb. cats, and hybrid white cats, and fawn-coloured cats, and—oh, rarity of rarities!—a real tortoiseshell tom, in whose coat not one white hair could be found!

PHILO-FELIS.



## ENSIGN ROLLYNGE'S CHRISTMAS GUARD IN THE JUNGLE.

IN FOUR PARADES.

I.—THE ROUSE.



THE bugles rang out clear and shrill at 3.30 A.M. on the 25th December, and, with many a growl and shiver, the gallant members of the "Kattiwar Tigers"—an old-fashioned Sepoy regiment, on its march down country—prepared to turn out for their allotted daily march.

Paddy Creagh, the acting Adjutant, started up from his *charpoy* at the first note, and quite regardless of the frosty earth, snakes, centipedes, or other unpleasant concomitants of the cold season

in India, stepped on to the bare ground, opened the canvas door of his tent, and bellowed like a bull, 'Boy! Sooka! Bo-hoy, cha lao!' which being interpreted meant that Paddy wanted his servant, Sooka, with the morning draught of tea.

'Acha, sahib, acha—lata,' replied the weak and teeth-chattering voice of Sooka, from a dingy cotton erection some little distance off, whence presently issued his shivering black form, clothed in white garments, and bearing a

huge pewter tankard, smoking with boiling tea. By the time the welcome beverage had arrived, that mighty warrior, Paddy—fond parents in the Emerald Isle had christened him Randal; his brother officers, Paddy—Creagh, had managed to light the half-frozen wick in his oil-lamp, endue his brawny limbs with the garment that denotes the man, and was sitting on the edge of his *charpoy* in an ecstasy of battle with tight Wellington boots.

'Sooka, ye banchute, where's me other boots?' he passionately questioned of the diddering slave, who stood before him with the tea.

'Sahib mak' them plenty wet when out Shikar—now all froze hard.'

'Froze hard be hanged!' muttered Paddy, as, with a great grunt, he finally conquered the reluctant Wellingtons.

Swallowing down his tea by hasty gulps, rapidly laying on flakes of war-paint, swearing at his servant, giving orders to interrupting native-officers and buglers, and hallooing to his English comrades of the adjacent tents, Paddy Creagh completed his toilet, and emerged to hasten on the parade.

The appearance of the camp was animated and peculiar. Numerous fires of every size, from the huge crackler of wood, blazing furiously in front of the officers' mess tent, down to the few sods of dried mud round which the wives and children of the Sepoys cowered, lit up the whole scene, save where weird, uncouth shadows of tents, baggage-wagons, camels, elephants, and the unwieldy *omnium gatherum* that goes to make up the "camp equipage" of an Indian regiment on march, cast strange patches of black on the rocky, uneven ground. Soldiers in every stage of dress or undress moved quickly about,

knocking loose the tent-pegs, carrying hot native drinks to comrades, searching for missing accoutrements, straying camels, or sleepy headed mule-drivers, loading the bullock-carts and baggage animals, while a perfect babel of sounds—animal, human, and inhuman—rose on all sides, and effectually routed out the most drowsy of the motley throng. Camels (lying down to receive the load) groaned hideously as every extra package was piled on their much-enduring backs, twisting and turning round their long, sinuous, wavy necks with a serpent-like motion, while, with awful cries, they made real or well-feigned attempts to bite all who approached. Thronging groups of vicious commissariat mules stood jingling their chains in concert, occasionally raising a general *mêlée* of biting, squealing and kicking at one another, until their roused drivers (aided with volunteers from the hosts of black urchins belonging to the regiment) rushed sudden and furious to battle, and subjugated the mutinous brutes with wholesale volleys of bamboo blows. The whole scene, in fact, reminded Paddy Creagh of the wild midnight saturnalia of his own native Donnybrook Fair, before 'a brutal and oppressive Saxon government' saw fit to stamp out the glories of that far-famed meeting. Indeed, were it not for the long lines of muskets, piled with bayonets fixed, glittering, bright, cold, and cruel, in the mingled fire and moonlight, he might well have been excused for the mental comparison.

During all this time bugle after bugle had sounded for the various stages of preparation. Gradually some degree of order was evolved out of the chaos by busy native-officers and sergeants, and when 'the close' sounded things were in a fair way for a start. The Eng-



lish officers ceased talking and swallowing hot tea by the mess-tent fire, threw away cheroots, and buckled on their swords, as they stumbled their way towards where the lanterns, the loom of rows of men, and the led horses indicated the place of parade. Companies were called over and 'told off,' a hasty inspection made, and Paddy Creagh, greatly conscious of dignity, saluted his chief as he reported, 'All present, sir!'

'Fours—right! Left wheel—Quick march!' bellowed Colonel Estcourt, and away went the 'Kattivar Tigers,' to the very inappropriate tune, for an Indian regiment, of 'The Girl I left behind me.'

The 'Tigers' were decidedly 'jungly,' as the phrase goes. Every officer in the corps was a mighty hunter, and each was thoroughly master of all Indian craft for leading a jovial, devil-may-care, up-country life. They cared little for society, as (save the mark!) meeting some half-dozen officers' wives and pallid spinsters at a band-stand is called; and if they had a slight reputation for holding too firm a faith in bottled beer and brandy-pawnee, they were strong-headed to bear those enticing drinks, working off all evil effects of powerful liquor by much gun and saddle work. As a rule, they pulled well together; but just now there was a shadow of rupture in the regiment as thus:—Poor Tom Carey, the adjutant, had gone pig-sticking, mounted on a splendid Arab. Tom never shirked anything that came before him; and though men shouted warningly to him, he would not swerve even a yard from his course, but went straight at the widest part of a gaping nullah in front. The horse could not do it—landed with only his forelegs on the opposite bank—struggled madly for a second—fell back on his rider, and Tom Carey spoke no

more words in this world; in a few hours all was over.

Who was to fill the vacancy (a very valuable appointment in a Sepoy corps)? That was the question now disturbing the usual calmness of the 'Tigers.' Paddy Creagh was, on the spur of the moment, named to act as adjutant for the present; but there were grave doubts in old Estcourt's mind as to the big Irishman's capabilities for the appointment, and he more than once hinted his inclination to choose Gerald Rollynge. Hence a fair ground for party feeling; and while the Colonel remained undecided as to the permanent appointment, the partisans of the two candidates hotly argued over their respective merits.

#### II.—'AT EASE.'

'Where is Rollynge, by-the-by?' asked young Barron, as he rode amidst a group who were, for the thousandth time, discussing the adjutant question. (On the march, in India, officers are always allowed to ride when the regiment is 'at ease.')

'With that lot in rear of the band, I should think,' replied Williams—a busy man, always ready with an answer to any question, and not much liked, save for his wealth, and consequent ability to play the *grand seigneur*.

'Hardly,' remarked another, 'Paddy is there, treating them to some of his Galway hunting crams; and Rollynge and Master Pat are a trifle cool until Estcourt makes up his mind. Besides, Rollynge got three days' leave to go shooting with Martin.'

'Cool!' grumbled out Singleton, the senior lieutenant, catching at the first word he heard, as he awoke from a nap. 'Ugh! I'm as cold as old Nick this frosty morning.'

'What a wonderful being old Nick must be, in your opinion, Sing,' sneered Williams, blowing a rich cloud from his Manilla. "'Hot as old Nick"—"cold as old Nick"—"rich as old Nick"—"poor as old Nick"—in fact, everything "as old Nick."'

'Don't be a fool, Polly' (Williams was always, for some occult reason, called 'Polly' by his comrades); and Singleton growled low to himself as he shivered in the saddle.

'Who said Martin was shooting?' asked Landon, the most noted sportsman in the corps.

'I did. He has got his "leave to England," and is going to shoot the road down to Bombay.'

'More fool he, wasting his time in these precious jungles,' broke in Williams, who preferred a stroll in the West End to all the sport in the world.

'Confound you for a brute!' exclaimed some one, as his horse made a heavy stumble in the dark.

'Touch and go! by Jove! Is that "Jorlocks?"' asked Singleton, with a grim sneer.

'Yes; the same blessed "Jorlocks!"' wrathfully answered the owner; 'and if I ever again buy an "Australian," or any other nag from you, old boy, I hope I may be smashed!'

Singleton laughed out aloud—he was one of those men made by nature for trading, being never in such good temper as when he had got the best of some unfortunate in a bargain, as he had done in this case.

'Oh be joyful! I see the coffee-shop lights ahead!' roared young Todd, spurring his Arab suddenly, thus causing him to bound wildly and scatter the group.

'Do be quiet, you griffin!' rose in a shout of execration from all; and Todd reined in his horse, as best he could.

The 'coffee-shop' is a great institution with a regiment marching down country. It is generally kept by a grey-bearded old Mussulman, whose life has been devoted to winning for himself a passport to the Prophet, by the simple, pleasing, and eminently lucrative duty of cheating the Feringhee. This hoary-headed old sinner usually starts overnight with his bullock-gharries and servants, along the track leading to the new camp which the regiment will occupy the following morning. As near half-way as can be managed, he halts at some stream or well of sweet water, lights his fires, sets on his huge coffee-pots to brew, so as to have the welcome decoction ready when the troops shall arrive, and then takes his repose. The spot old Hajee Ebram had selected on this Christmas morning was beautiful, and more than one English heart beat again as the scene called back a memory of some pleasant pic-nic corner of the far-off homeland. Down from between two rugged and scrub-clad hills a lovely brook came dashing and sparkling in the soft blue starlight, now tumbling over a tortuous and rocky course in wild delight; then dashing madly, with showers of milk-tossed spray, over a natural cascade; anon placidly gliding with gurgling cadence in peaceful level, till a sudden turn over a smaller cascade sent it swirling through a magnificent *tope* of trees, under whose protecting branches the camp fires had been lit and sent out a glow that added to the charms of the scene.

Horses were dismounted and handed over to their keepers; swords were unbuckled and littered the ground; cheroots lit, coffee loudly called for; the Sepoys 'piled arms,' 'broke off,' and spread themselves in picturesque groups amidst the trees.

'Sharp morning, gentlemen,' remarked Colonel Estcourt, as he waddled over to where his officers were grouped, standing or lying on the hard dry earth. Various adjectives were applied to the term 'cold' in the replies of most of the officers, who liked old Estcourt and tried to give him a hearty answer—in private they chaffed at the old gentleman, freely imitating his waddle and manner of speaking through his nose.

'Hullo, Rollynge! Mufti?' queried Vernon, the major, as he observed that officer reclining under a tree in sporting costume, and a gun across his knees.

'Yes, major; the messman wanted some game for the Christmas dinner, so I got leave and have only just caught you up.'

'Made a good bag?'—Vernon was fond of game; besides, he had a managing wife and a marriageable daughter, and gave dinners when the larder was in good trim.

'Pretty well,' was the answer; 'I told my man to take a couple of hares and a few birds to Mrs. Vernon the first day.'

'Thanks, my dear fellow: I don't interfere in the domestic affairs.' The worthy major was, all the same, quite well aware of the present—"or you can't think how happy I should have been to ask you to take your Christmas dinner in my tent: now, unfortunately, our table is quite filled up.'

Figuratively speaking, Gerald Rollynge put his tongue in his cheek; actually, he blandly smiled while replying: 'Thanks, Major; I'm sure I didn't expect such kindness for a few head of game.'

Major Vernon turned away to speak to some one else, and bit his nails furiously as he felt the delicate touch of sarcasm that had been bestowed on him. The major—or rather Mrs. Major—preferred captains, or at least well-to-do

lieutenants to grace her table; she hated ensigns, to which class Rollynge belonged; and besides, the worthy couple were well aware that he had been very attentive to Miss Hetty Vernon, while that young lady had not disguised her partiality for the handsome but moneyless—not to say deeply involved—subaltern.

'Coming along with us, Rollynge?' asked Barron, as the bugles sounded for the regiment to resume its march.

'No; I think I shall have a nap here, and gallop into camp in time for breakfast.'

And he did have a nap, of about ten minutes' duration, until the regiment had marched so far that the band could be only faintly heard through the thick jungle, when he jumped into his saddle and galloped off through the broken ground and dense scrub that fringed the track his comrades were traversing. When he judged himself about a mile's distance at right angles to the line of march, and out of sight of the regiment, he turned again in the direction it was taking, stirred up his nag with hand and spur, and bounded along at blood-firing speed.

### III.—'RIGHT ABOUT FACE!'

Why did Gerald Rollynge take that deceiving nap? Why is he now riding along at full speed, spurring his horse as much by his own energy as by the Latchfords that adorn his heels? Why does he sing, in rich manly voice, snatches of triumphant songs heard long ago? Why does he turn and bound in his saddle, executing strange sabre-cuts with his stout bamboo on the heads of unoffending jungle plants? Why does he feel like all his favourite boyish heroes rolled into one—fancying himself young Lochinvar

coming out of the West; Prince Rupert, Murat, Bonnie Dundee,—or as any other scampish cavalier that ever threw leg over saddle, e'er charging to do or die?

Simply because his blood rages hot through his veins with eager expectation; because he rides to change hope into certainty, as he thinks; because he had had a letter and a message: because, in fine, he spurs to meet Hetty Vernon, as she rides out from the new camp to meet the regiment.

A pleasant glade under the neem-trees, some two miles away in the jungle; a tall, handsome, fair-haired Englishman, in a close-fitting hunting suit—manly-looking, but now with eyes wet, as he pleaded, and begged and prayed; two horses led a short distance off by a studiously unobservant *ghora-wallah*; a huge tree, against which leant a slender, riding-habited girl, switching nervously with delicate horse-tail *chabook* at the herbage—Hetty Vernon and



Gerald Rollynge. And where was his hope now? Certainly flown? Gone; melted like a snow-drift; dissipated by a few words—words that left him in despair. Again he pleaded:

'But you confess you like me—loved me, you said once. What have I done to change you?'

The dark, oval face of the girl was raised, the black eyes glistened and watered, the flowing jet locks were flung over the shoulders with an impatient, passionate action; the riding-whip tapped hastily against her habit, and she spoke:

'I do love you, Gerald; believe

me, I do. But what more can I say? They have positively forbidden me to speak to you alone again, and they forced me to promise I would not meet you.'

'Yes, but about Poll—about Williams: is it true you are engaged to him?'

She sunk her head low, the bright, bitter tears fell, the whip rattled against her dress as though ague-stricken,—'Almost,' she murmured.

He turned away with a harsh laugh to go; she made a gesture to stop him, and went on:

'Almost engaged: they drove me into it. I hate the very thought of it; but what could I do?'

Her beseeching, upcast, innocent eyes proved to the utmost the constraint under which she had been driven by her worldly-minded parents, and Rollynge knew that she was true to him.

'Would they let you marry me if I got the adjutancy, Hetty?' he asked, after a pause.

'I would marry you whether they did or not,' she answered almost fiercely, looking boldly and yet lovingly straight in his blue eyes; 'I would marry you to-morrow, Gerald, if I could be only sure I was not ruining you—yes, in defiance of them all!'

'Darling!' he was beginning, when the *ghora-wallah* struck in with:

'Sahib, sahib! Major mem-sahib ata bye!'

'Go! go! oh, for heaven's sake go!' she cried, in an agony of fear.

In the hurry he gave her the first wild kiss of love, jumped into the saddle, and dashed away through the thick jungle in the opposite direction to that in which Mrs. Vernon was taking her morning ride. The *ghora-wallah*, with

\* 'Sir, sir, the major's wife is coming!'

the true instincts of his race, pitched Hetty into the saddle with one nervous jerk, gave the horse a pat with his hand that set him off at a smart canter that fully accounted for the high colour in the daughter's face as she reined him in when she came up to the mother. The *ghora-wallah* panted dreadfully when he got up to hold her rein, and Hetty was sharply called to account for her cruelty in making the poor man run so fast after her. Such are the gentle devices of that art that laughs at locksmiths.

Colonel Estcourt was expounding the law in the large mess-tent, after breakfast. In other words, he was holding 'orderly-room,' receiving the doctor's reports, the quarter-master's complaints, the adjutant's list of offenders—dealing with each with all the gravity and (as he thought) justice of Solomon. But if he 'tempered justice with mercy,' his soldierly conscience compelled him to reverse the operation in due turn in a manner peculiar to himself, so that his judgments were formed in sandwich-like layers—now justice, then mercy—in pretty equal proportions, and with a singularity and regularity that excited both merriment and dismay.

'Private Ram Sing, sir,' read out Paddy Creagh; 'beating his wife, Chundee, insensible with a *lotah*.'

'Bad case; very bad case, Mr. Creagh. Let him have an extra baggage guard.'

'But, sir, he nearly killed the poor woman,' the surgeon ventured to remonstrate, at this absurdly-lenient sentence.

'I've written down the punishment now, Dr. Hunter, and it can't be altered,' snuffed the colonel through his nose. The doctor subsided.

'These are three camel-wallahs,

sir; they were nearly ten minutes late with their tents this morning,' and the quarter-master put forward the three cowering natives in fault.

'Ah, we shall never have these fellows in time without an example; let them have four-dozen lashes apiece.'

The poor wretches howled, and called on their dead fathers and mothers to save them from the suffering and indignity, alleging that they *could* not be in time, as their loads were given them too late.

'Pooh, nonsense; example—must: and see you, drum-major, let your lads flog them properly.'

So the farce went on. When it was over, the colonel rose with all the consciousness of an officer who has done his duty to his country, and waddled off towards his own tents in a perfect state of self-satisfaction.

'May I have a word with you, sir?' asked Rollynge, catching him up.

'Certainly, certainly; what is it, Mr. Rollynge?'

'I wanted to ask you, sir, if you think you could give me the adjutancy, sir,' he blurted out, determined to risk all to gain Hetty Vernon.

Now, Colonel Estcourt had a great dislike to being asked for anything: a request savoured of advice or suggestion, and as he desired all his conduct to appear as if emanating from his own fertile brain, he usually huffed when asked a favour, and refused it point-blank. He drew himself up; he was on his dignity at once.

'Mr. Rollynge,' he said, 'Mr. Rollynge, I am in the habit of deciding in these cases as seems best for the interests of the service; and those interests, I may say, do not point to you, but to another, as the proper person to

fill the vacancy,' and the old man wagged his head wisely, and stumbled over a guy-rope as he walked into his tent, leaving poor Gerald Rollynge thunderstruck with despair.

'I say, Singleton, me boy,' said Paddy Creagh, coming into the mess-tent, where most of the 'Tigers' were at *tiffin*, 'you'll be for the treasure-guard this evening; Gilpin has gone sick.'

'D—— that treasure-guard!' said Singleton, ferociously.

'The worst of it is, I should think, having to stay up all night when one does get to the new camp,' complacently remarked Paddy Creagh, who had never done the duty himself. A roar of laughter burst from all the subalterns at table.

'Just as if any one is such a muff as to do that, Paddy,' said Barron.

'You don't suppose we are a set of drivelling idiots, do you, Paddy? Why, even old Estcourt hardly expects that,' and young Todd continued his attentions to the curried green parrot—a succulent jungle dainty—he was discussing.

'Don't he, though!' broke in Landon; 'by Jove, he'd "smash" any fellow he thought turned-in when on that guard.'

'I know a fellow who will take the guard for you, Sing,' remarked Barron, with his mouth half full.

'Who, in the name of goodness?'

'Rollynge.'

'Will he really, do you think?'

'Certain. He told me he had some row with old Estcourt, and wanted to avoid the Christmas dinner.'

'By Jove, that's lucky! I'll go and ask him at once. You can square it for us, I suppose, Paddy?'



'Oh, bedad, I can! Anything to get Rollynge away from glaring at me as if he wanted to ate me without salt,' answered Creagh, devoting himself to a foaming tankard of Bass.

This treasure—some twelve artillery tumbrils full of specie—had been handed over to the care of the 'Tigers' by the civil government at Rampore, to take to the station they were marching on. It was a great worry to the officers, as it gave them an extra guard, and had always to be taken on to the new camping ground the night before the regiment marched. The officer was strictly ordered, on account of the disturbed state of the country, to stay up with it until the regiment marched in the next morning; but, as hinted above, instead of thus acting, he usually had his tent pitched amongst the tumbrils, placed his loaded and capped revolver under his pillow, and turned in comfortably for a night's sleep.

Singleton found Rollynge in a desperate fit of the blues, and only anxious to get away from the camp. He was delighted at the chance of the duty, and at half-past four in the afternoon paraded his guard with the treasure tumbrils, mounted his horse, and with a sigh of relief marched away from the Christmas revelry.

IV.—'THE LAST POST.'

'The Roast Beef of Old England,' at eight o'clock on that Christmas evening, summoned the 'Tigers' to the large mess-tent, the interior of which presented a gorgeous spectacle. The canvas walls were lined with crimson hangings, contrasting well with the snowy vaulted-roof of the tent, from the ridge-pole of which numerous oil lamps of coloured glass were suspended to within a few feet of the

long white-clothed table that glittered again with silver, cut-glass, flowers, and rich china. Behind the colonel's chair the colours of the regiment flaunted their gaudy drapery; and when all had sat down, the red jackets, white waist-coats, and scarlet *cummerbunds* of the officers, the gold-embroidered turbans and rich waist-bands of the white-dressed servants, the well-laden table, the patches of tinted light and shade from flashing flasks of seductive wines, made up a picture of varied hues unequalled for brilliancy of effect. All was pleasure, joviality and confusion; and when—to the tune of 'See the Conquering Hero Comes'—the white-bearded old Mussulman appeared (his black face glistening with pride) bearing aloft an enormous *bond fide* Christmas plum-pudding, stuck all over with blanched almonds and decorated with a sprig of something very like mistletoe, the climax was attained, and hearty cheers proclaimed the success of his Eastern imitation of an English Christmas dinner. Then came the post-prandial wine; healths were drunk; speeches, comic and sentimental, were made, and songs were sung as the bottles went merrily round, and the festival was at its utmost height, when suddenly a full stop was put to the merriment—the song broke off short, the point of the anecdote was never told, the joke was stifled in its birth. 'The alarm!'—'The alarm!' was shouted on all sides, as the notes of that bugle-call rang wildly out on the night air from the main guard, and was repeated still more wildly from all the others!

'What is it?'—'What's the matter?' was eagerly questioned as the officers tumbled out of the tent into the darkness. The sepoys were rushing half naked out of their tents; the women and chil-

dren screamed with frightened discordant voices; camels groaned fearfully; elephants trumpeted; dogs barked; buffaloes bellowed in their mad terror—while, to add to the confusion, the baggage mules broke loose from their pickets and stampeded through the heart of the camp like fiends unchained.

'Ag!' 'Fire!' 'Ag aya!' was yelled from one to another in every language and every tone, and all was wild confusion and dismay. The jungle for miles in front was on fire! Away to the south could be seen, at a considerable distance but rapidly rushing on, a great bright glare and spots of flame extending along the whole of the front, overlapping the flanks, and in the direction from which a sharp wind was blowing.

'Sound the "Assembly," bugler!' shouted old Estcourt, as the sepoys kept wildly rushing about. 'Why, the —, Mr. Creagh, can't you get your native-officers together?'

But alas! poor Paddy had been imbibing the champagne at too fast a rate to be master of himself and rolled about in the confusion like a ship without a rudder.

A horse came madly dashing up to where the colonel stood surrounded by his bewildered officers. It was suddenly checked by the strong hand of the rider, and Gerald Rollynge spoke hastily as he flung himself out of the saddle:

'Pardon, Colonel! I thought it best to leave my guard and gallop in with news of the fire.'

'Was it you, then, who ordered the guards to sound the alarm?'

'It was, sir. I saw the fire miles away when I was keeping treasure guard, and hurried in to warn you.'

'Quite right, sir; quite right! And now see and get the companies together.'

Gerald Rollynge set to work with a will and an energy quite

equal to the occasion; and in a very short time the regiment was got into something like shape. Companies were detached to the front to cut down the scrub to stay the fire; the great body of men and camp-followers were set to work at striking the tents, loading the baggage animals, and making preparations for a retreat behind a large lake lying some distance in rear of the camp; while the remainder were employed in carrying the ammunition to a neighbouring well down which it was thrown. Rollynge had only just been in time. One quarter of an hour more and he would have been too late; and as the last man got behind the *bund* of the tank the fire came dancing and leaping in weird wild flames over the lately occupied camp-ground, consuming and destroying everything before it.

'But how did you manage to discover the fire so soon, Mr. Rollynge?' asked Colonel Estcourt, two days afterwards, when the regiment was once more comfortably under canvas.

'I always walk up and down in front of my tent when on treasure guard, sir, or rest awhile on one of the tumbrils; so I saw it as soon as it could be seen, and galloped in at once to warn your guard.'

'Saved the camp, sir; saved the camp, by Jove! by your vigilance—and you shall be rewarded, Mr. Rollynge.'

And Gerald Rollynge was rewarded. He appeared in Orders that evening as adjutant; and, two weeks afterwards, ran away with the willing Hetty Vernon, and was married by the *papre* at the next station. He never quite told *why* he had kept guard so well that Christmas night; but—no matter—we will put it down to zeal for duty.

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Drawn by A. Johnson.]

A CHRISTMAS FAIRY RING.

## SOME CHRISTMAS GIFT BOOKS.

IN the tropical atmosphere of this Christmas-time, when our literary plants put forth gigantic leaves, and display their brightest and most tempting fruit, the readers of 'London Society'—whose taste for book-illustration is never forgotten in these pages—may be glad to learn something of the harvest of 1871. Without attempting any classification, we will mention, as far as space will permit, a few of the most noteworthy books of the season, not forgetting those for children, which, as usual, are overwhelming in number and variety.

First in point of attractiveness for old and young—if not in the very highest walk of art—must be mentioned a beautiful edition of 'Fairy Tales' by Hans Christian Andersen (Sampson Low, & Co.), with twelve illustrations by the Hon. Mrs. Boyle. It is a large quarto volume, on which much pains has been bestowed to reproduce in colour-printing the bright poetical designs of the artist (who draws under the well-known initials E. V. B.), and to set in the most brilliant framework possible the familiar fairy stories of Hans Andersen. There is a boldness and fanciful grace in some of these illustrations which we have seldom seen surpassed, and which will astonish some readers who see this method of printing in colours for the first time. It will be understood at once that this is not, as might appear from the title-page, merely a child's book, when we add that the quality of some of the illustrations remind one of the publications of the Arundel Society. 'Homely Scenes from Great Painters' (Cassell) is the rather curiously-worded title

of a collection of twenty-four photographs, from engravings from well-known paintings by Sir Joshua Reynolds and Rubens down to Frith and Frank Stone. They are well printed by the 'Woodbury process,' and accompanied by familiar descriptive letterpress by G. W. Turner. This, again, is a handsome and graceful gift-book to be bought and preserved for its illustrations more than for its letterpress, which contains some curious conceits. Thus, speaking of the late Frank Stone, the author says, 'His name is one of those curious inventions of mere chance which are as apt as anything of the kind in fiction. The duality that became so monotonous in the painter's productions is suggested by the two simple syllables of his name, as also in the genial *rigidity* of his style. The figures in the well-known 'First Appeal' are such as a modeller would fashion, without any thought of invading the domain of the pictorial art; the young man stands and leans exactly as the young lady stands and leans in the picture of the 'Heart's Misgivings—he, like her, is, in fact, *'stony'*!'

As an illustrated gift-book of the first-class, suitable for any season, 'Holbein and his Time' (Bentley), from the German of Dr. Woltmann, claims our next notice. Containing, as it does, an elaborate account of the life and works of Holbein, and, of what is of equal importance to art-students, of the Holbeins that are *not* Holbeins; with sixty illustrations, many being copies of little known paintings, it furnishes perhaps the most complete category of his works ever published in England. It is produced

with great care and taste; some of the engravings, especially those which are reproductions of sketches in metallic pencil, being admirable *facsimiles*. There is a portrait of one of the artist's family at page 74, which is quite equal to an etching.

But of all books that have come before us this season, for excellence and beauty in the engravings, there is none to compare with 'Whymper's Scrambles amongst the Alps' (Murray). In preparation for some years, and published, we believe, some months ago, it takes its place amongst 'gift-books' as the very best on the list. In plain modest binding, and without flourish of any kind, it presents to the reader the finest specimens of illustrations upon wood ever produced. Mr. Whymper, author, artist and mountaineer, has produced a book which (a labour of love to him) will be a charming possession to all who care for the Alps. It is written in an attractive style, and is full of adventure, but as a work of reference for those who make the high peaks and passes of Switzerland their playground, or their study at home, it will also be found most valuable. It is difficult, without an appearance of exaggeration, to give our readers an idea of the beauty and delicacy of these engravings; we can only assure them from personal knowledge, of the extraordinary accuracy of detail in mountain form, and of the wonderful delineation of the various geological formations. We should add, that an anxiety to be accurate has resulted in a certain photographic hardness in some of the views; and that the enthusiasm of the author, who, we understand, has superintended not only the printing but even the making of the paper, has given what we may call a 'superfine' finish to the

book with which an artist 'pure and simple' would scarcely have sympathy. But when we have said this, we have taken the only objection to a book which has never been surpassed in attractiveness, nor, indeed, in intrinsic merit.

As a worthy companion to 'Scrambles amongst the Alps'—indeed, as an almost necessary adjunct to it, a charming book of 'Alpine Plants,' with coloured illustrations of the most striking and beautiful of the mountain flowers, has just been issued by Messrs. Bell and Daldy. This little work had its origin, as its author, Mr. David Wooster, modestly says, 'in a desire to aid, in some measure, the efforts which have lately been made to restore to popular favour the very beautiful little plants, natives of high latitudes, which for some years have been treated with unmerited neglect.' The illustrations to 'Alpine Plants,' printed in colours, are produced with a refinement and delicacy which makes the book delightful to look at, and, as a means to an end, that of popularising Alpine flowers in English gardens, will surely be most useful. The illustrations have been drawn from the living specimens, generally in full flower, and the botanic names are given with great clearness and accuracy.

Such books as the two foregoing coming to us at Christmas time, carry us away in imagination from the noise of cities to

'The silence of thatched cottages, and the voices of blossoming fields.'

They realise to us at a distance the beauty of Alpine scenes, and cultivate a taste for informal gardens and wild flowers, which is as healthy as delightful.

'Curiosities of Entomology' (Groombridge), contains in a small compass some very interest-



ing information about Bees; 'Insect Disguises'; 'The Ephemera, or May fly,' &c., illustrated in colours, more delicately and carefully than in any book of the kind we have met with. Of the same class we should mention 'Marvels of Pond Life'; 'A year's microscopic recreation among the Polyyps, Infusoria, Rotifers, Water Bears, and Polyzoa,' by H. J. Slade; also 'The Amateur Flower Garden,' by Shirley Hibberd; the latter following too much, to our thinking, in the beaten track of 'bedding out,' of iron seats, and stiff borders, but containing, nevertheless, a mass of useful information.

We are bound to tell our readers that a pleasantly written little book of travel, by Lady Barker, called 'Travelling about on New and Old Ground' (Routledge), is merely a compilation from such works as Baker's 'Albert Nyanza,' Livingston's 'South Africa,' &c.; but the fact stands confessed in the preface, and the work is well done. It forms a good solid gift-book, giving a *resumé* of recent travel in every quarter of the globe, told in an unaffected, straightforward fashion, that carries the reader on irresistibly to the end. As a change from the romantic and sensational stories of travel with which we are all familiar, we commend this sober, earnest 'record of the perseverance and energy of brave men who have led the van in the march of civilization all over the world.'

'The Child's Book of Song and Praise' (Cassell), is a collection of songs, sacred and secular, interspersed with numerous engravings, the best of which have been published before. It includes thirty-four pieces of music, with piano-forte accompaniment. That the transition from songs sacred to

ditties profane and rollicking is rather abrupt, is perhaps hardly to be accounted a fault in these days. Some of the 'Child's Songs' are very pretty—one to 'Baby Freddie,' on page 134, is a model song for a child to sing. 'The Child's Bible Narrative' (Cassell), is a consecutive arrangement of the narrative (in the words of the 'authorized version'), printed in paragraphs with much that is considered unsuitable to children omitted. We can only say of this book that it is preferable to 'Bible Stories' for children, and that the editor has accomplished a difficult task with care and reverence. The frontispiece consisting of a Doré's illustration of Noah's ark might well have been omitted.

'Moonshine,' a collection of fairy stories by Knatchbull-Hugessen, M.F. (Macmillan), will be welcomed by all those who remember his 'Stories for my Children.' It is illustrated with humorous woodcuts by William Brunton, and forms one of the most acceptable of this year's books, although a small and unpretentious one. 'Christmas Cake in Four Quarters,' by Lady Barker, is another child's book of the same class, which we can confidently recommend to our distant readers. The Four 'Quarters' refer to four Christmas days, in England, Jamaica, India, and New Zealand.

Routledge's 'Every Boy's Annual' has now reached its tenth year, and will be as popular with boys as in the first of its existence. It is as full as ever of exciting and rather bloodthirsty narratives of battles and hairbreadth escapes. Flaming coloured illustrations of sea-fights and shipwrecks attract, as usual, at the expense of the probabilities. The contents are pleasantly varied with notes on games, on sketching, fishing, and the like. There is a theory—no doubt a true

one—that records of adventure tend to manliness and self-reliance; but we must not overlook a pernicious tendency, in some writers for the young, to manufacture 'sensational' stories and pictures of horrors, of which both young and old might well be spared the knowledge. There is one story here of alligators—a record so awful, that the purchaser of this year's annual will do well to erase it before his children take it to their land of dreams.

The title of 'Household Tales and Fairy Stories,' with nearly four hundred illustrations (Routledge), speaks for itself. It is one of the most attractive and least objectionable of these over-illustrated books for children; drawings by John Gilbert, Harrison Weir, and other artists of renown, appear on nearly every page, and there is scarcely a drawing out of this enormous number that we could wish away.

'Old Merry's Annual' (Hodder and Stoughton), with its 776 closely-printed pages, is as welcome as ever, with entertaining stories by W. H. Kingston and others, and with secondhand information on almost every subject that could be named. Without attempting any great pictorial display, it attracts a multitude of readers by its easy and familiar method of discoursing. It is essentially a book for a

companion, and would make a lad feel less lonely anywhere. The 'Little Folks' volume (Cassell) should be noticed as one of the best of children's picture-books; full of variety, life, and incident; free from vulgarity or claptrap of any kind, and containing in one small, cheap volume, nearly five hundred illustrations with descriptive letterpress. 'Ben Burton,' by W. H. Kingston (Low & Co.), with quaint illustrations by Sydney Hall; 'Jack Hazard and his Fortunes' (Low & Co.); and 'Nine Years Old' (Macmillan), with charming illustrations by Frölich, are three little Christmas books which we have only just space to mention. 'Old Saws New Set,' by the author of 'A Trap to catch a Sunbeam,' contains some good stories, and revives in the telling some curious old sayings, such as 'Light-heeled mothers make leaden-heeled daughters.' 'It is a sad house where the hen crows and the cock is mute,' and many others with a domestic moral.

'Be always as merry as ever you can,  
For no one delights in a sorrowful  
man.'

should be the motto of the last book on our list, 'The Merrie Heart' (Cassell), a sprightly collection of old nursery rhymes, ornamented with very original and clever illustrations.



## THE PICCADILLY PAPERS.

FORSTER'S LIFE OF CHARLES DICKENS.\*

**M**R. FORSTER has constituted himself a kind of historiographer and biographer-in-chief in English literature. His voluminous historical works, with all their ability and industry, do not escape the error that has spoilt so much history, that strong partizan spirit that poisons history at its very source. But as a literary biographer and essayist, there can only be one opinion of Mr. Forster's merits. The 'Life of Oliver Goldsmith,' and the 'Life of Walter Savage Landor,' are, on the whole, the best specimens of literary biography in the language. In his life of Dickens, Mr. Forster has found his best and most popular subject, but perhaps not the fittest for the exhibition of his own intellectual powers. The public, however, will readily excuse this. What they want is facts, and not fine writing. English readers are anxious to obtain all the information they can about their beloved companion and favourite, Charles Dickens. Mr. Forster has shown great self-denial, great literary skill in keeping himself altogether in the background and allowing Dickens to display his own character, we may add much good taste, in the reticence with which he deals with many living interests connected with the life so lately lost. Dickens, great literary good fortune has pursued him in the matter of his biographer, who was not only a distinguished author, but, for thirty years, his great and chiefest friend. It is easy to see that on

various emergencies Mr. Forster was to him a great help and a wise and useful counsellor to his illustrious friend, and this work shows indications that evidently might have been largely extended by the affection and esteem in which he was held by Dickens. Mr. Forster's chief literary criticism is, that Dickens' later novels were better than his first, in which we imagine that very few will agree with him; but the life, which omits much that we expected, which repeats much that we know, is still the best which we are likely to have, and speaks with an authority which none other is likely to possess.

There cannot be a greater contrast than between the blaze of success that came upon Dickens as a young man of twenty-five and the privation and misery of his childhood. His first experiences were those of a debtors' prison, and for a long time he worked in a blacking manufactory. Indeed, it was from a thorough drilling of sorrow and adversity, more keen and intense than perhaps we understand, that this marvellous genius was evoked. He was a man who lived much in his affections, and in his affections he was at times deeply wounded. Dickens was not inured to ways of softness and gave himself no quarter. No man worked harder, or brought more thorough concentration to his work. One clever lady said of his face, at a time when Maclise made him look so handsome, only that his hair much needed cutting, that it was a face of steel. He had acuteness and mirth in a marvellous degree, and

\* 'The Life of Charles Dickens.' By John Forster. Vol. I., 1812-1842. Chapman and Hall.

a faculty of throwing his whole soul into any work he did. As a reporter, he worked harder and attained to higher excellence perhaps than any man who has taken notes at law courts, public meetings, and parliament. He has told us how he has written out his notes on the palm of his hand, by the light of a dark lantern, 'in a postchaise-and-four galloping in the dead of night through a wild country. It was a lucky accident for him that he saw the last of the old cars and old coaching days which he has daguerrotyped for ever. The most popular author of the day, he subjected himself to severe unremitting drudgery, and bound himself down by time and measure to finish his wonderful works. Quite to the last he used to make his hours of walking correspond with his hours of work, forgetting that he did his hardest work while walking. We are not surprised to hear that in early life he was lavishly, even foolishly generous. In fact, his whole system was maintained at high pressure.

As his circle of life expands his plots and range of characters expand. He goes abroad, and describes foreign scenes. He meets lords and ladies, and he describes lords and ladies. His friends, and the world at large, do all that they can to spoil and flatter him, but it is to his credit that he is not spoilt. His clique calls him the Inimitable, and he appropriates the title with the thorough belief that the world is right; there is at times a little self consciousness and affectation about him, and he does not seem properly to appreciate human greatness when it lays in characters remote from that of his own. Still, he associated like a prince on equal terms with the greatest intellectual chiefs in the land, and what we see revealed of

his life harmonizes with that hearty liking and good will which we all have for his writings.

Mr. Forster's undertaking will practically yield for us a new work by Charles Dickens, namely, his familiar letters which he writes with a fairness and eagerness which will reveal him very completely to his readers. It is curious to see how a man of town, like Dickens, appreciates great natural scenery. He is thunderstruck in a way with Niagara, and still more with Glencoe, but his admiration is too spasmodically expressed. At times Mr. Forster takes us, as it were, into the literary workshop, and we are able to see the germs and the process, *semina et stamina*, of his different characters. We are enabled to see also that he had a moral earnestness of his own, and strove hard in his vocation of a novelist to be of some practical use to his generation. The saying is far truer of him than of Garrick, that his death eclipsed the gaiety of nations and diminished the public stock of harmless pleasure. Among the various passages that might be cited, the reference to the famous raven of 'Barnaby Rudge' are very amusing. Grip, the raven, might be called one of the impersonal characters of Dickens. It plays a part of almost human agency, just as the cuttlefish might almost be called the hero of Victor Hugo 'Travailleurs.' The Stereoscopic Company has widely circulated his fame, and he enjoyed an apotheosis, being sketched by the pencil of Maclise. Thus Dickens announced his death: 'You will be greatly shocked and grieved to hear that the raven is no more. He expired to-day at a few minutes after twelve o'clock at noon. He had been ailing for a few days, but we anticipated no serious result, con-

jecturing that a portion of the white paint he swallowed last summer might be lingering about his vitals without having any serious effect upon his constitution. Yesterday afternoon he was taken so much worse that I sent an express for the medical gentleman, who promptly attended and administered a powerful dose of castor oil. Under the influence of this medicine he recovered so far as to be able at eight o'clock, p.m., to bite Topping. His night was peaceful. This morning at daybreak he appeared better; received (agreeably to the doctor's directions) another dose of castor oil; and partook plentifully of some warm gruel, the flavour of which he appeared to relish. Towards eleven o'clock he was so much worse, that it was found necessary to muffle the stable-knocker. At half-past, or thereabouts, he was heard talking to himself about the horse and Topping's family, and to add some incoherent expressions which are supposed to have been either a foreboding of his approaching dissolution, or some wishes relative to the disposal of his little property: consisting chiefly of halfpence which he had buried in different parts of the garden. On the clock striking twelve he appeared slightly agitated, but he soon recovered, walked twice or thrice along the coach-house, stopped to bark, staggered, exclaimed, *Halloa, old girl!* (his favourite expression) and died.

We shall not think it necessary to make any further extracts from a work with which the public will be speedily familiar. The first is the intense reality with which he threw his own life into the life of his characters, which probably gives us the secret of his marvellous power and world-wide popularity. When he had finished one

of his works, he paced the streets of Paris all night, unable to rest. He wound up the life of 'Little Nell,' in the 'Old Curiosity Shop,' with inexpressible reluctance and sorrow: 'Nobody will miss her like I shall. It is such a very painful thing to me that I really cannot express my sorrow. Old wounds bleed afresh when I only think of the way of doing it.' Moreover, there is a touch of shadow and sorrowfulness that will help to make our remembrance of her more tender. Although he was the most cheerful man of his age, the greatest favourite in society, the most popular of literary men, we find him writing, in 1862, to his biographer: 'I must entreat you to pause for an instant, and to go back to what you know of my childish days, and to ask yourself whether it is natural that something of the character formed in me then, and lost under happier circumstances, should have reappeared in the last five years. The never-to-be-forgotten misery of that old time bred a certain shrinking sensitiveness in a certain ill-clad, ill-fed child, that I have found come back in the never-to-be-forgotten misery of this later time.' In one of his letters to his friend he wishes him many a happy Christmas in this life, and eternal summer in the next. May that eternal summer indeed be his!

#### IN AN OXFORD COMMON ROOM.

You do not often get a better dinner or pleasanter talk than when you have dined at the high table of an Oxford college, and afterwards adjourned to the common room. In old undergraduate days, when the beef of to-morrow succeeded the mutton of to-day, there were wild legends in hall respecting the prodigality of the fellows' tables, and we wondered

how the well-fed dons could consume with quiet consciences their sumptuous repasts, when they reflected that within a few yards of them were a hoard of their fellow-creatures who never soared beyond the plainest joints. The high table still preserves its historical reputation; but the glories of hall are not now what they once were; and fellows no longer make eating and drinking a great business of their lives, whatever they may have done in the old Georgian days. We hear with grateful minds the long Latin grace from the Bible-clerk, who earns an academical subsistence by repeating it, the said Bible-clerk, however, not partaking of the dinner for which he vicariously returns thanks, but subsiding from the dais to the indifferent fare of lower tables. We have the massive plate with college arms; we sit beneath the portraits of founders and benefactors; all around are bits of painted glass and armorial bearings; the oriel, the oaken roof, the huge fire-place have their familiar and stately aspect; the old white-headed servants move noiselessly about, and a well-studied and most modern *menu* is handed round for intelligent admiration. As yet only a few of the colleges have wine on the high tables, except on high days, the old fashion being that wine be reserved for the common room, where the only orthodox drinks are port and sherry. The dining hour has crept on generally; it is now oftener six than any other hour. And dinner is certainly the great event of the day for the ruling body of the college, though the old achievements of the occasion have almost died out. The don's work—often very severe intellectual work—is finished; and the college don will not now do more work than he can help. It is a bright, cheerful meal, with far

better talk than at ordinary dinners, and lasts exactly an hour. Then we adjourn to the dark-wainscoted common room, with its warmth and luxury. Our moderate cups circulate cheerfully but slowly; the talk becomes more general, animated, and careful. One or two men rather lead the conversation; and I have known such men accredited, not unjustly, with diligently preparing themselves during the morning for the dialogue of the evening symposium. In about an hour and a half the talk is brought to an end; but our hospitable bursar will give us coffee and anchovy toast in his room, where the interrupted threads of conversation are resumed, and the commenced arguments are fought out. Perhaps one is a college tutor, and he has promised to look over the compositions of some of the men; another is a coach, and has a team to drive; a third has one of those social engagements which so unceasingly thicken upon resident fellows; and a fourth has got to look over proofs, or write a leader: but there is still a knot who linger latest in the common room, or in some man's room prolong the common room talk.

There is no doubt but the tone of the Oxford colleges is immensely raised from what it was some generations ago. This applies to the dons, perhaps, even in a greater measure than to the undergraduates. It may have been a matter of complaint that the educational work of the University has been left too much in the hands of very young men. This mistake—for, upon the whole, it must be pronounced a mistake—may be expected to right itself in time. It is no longer thought that a great thing to be aimed at by a college is a bin of famous port. There is a loftiness and integrity of aim



among men which may be accredited to the earnestness of our modern days. Bishop Pattison, martyred in the Southern Seas, died a fellow of Merton; and there are many fellows of colleges who, in differing ways, reproduced that manly and saintly life. It is not so much the *dilettante-ism* of lettered ease and leisure—though Oxford common rooms know much of that—in a robuster and ampler success of aim. For instance, I know a small college, where the members are not rich men, where a wealthy living of some seven hundred a year was refused by all the fellows until it came to the junior fellow of all. It was not that the fellows were insensible to the advantage of valuable preferment—and several of them owned that it was not likely that they should have so good a chance again—but most of the fellows had found that their main work in life was now fixed. One man was labouring as a missionary, another as a schoolmaster, another was busy amid the perplexities of an immense parish, another ardently devoted to the progress of science; and it did not seem befitting to them that they should tamper with, and perhaps spoil, their life's work, for the sake of private gain. Another curious sign is the number of men who, having graduated, do not seem to care to take up their Master's degree. It may be noted, by-the-way, as one of the phenomena of Oxford life, that valuable college livings are frequently declined by all the fellows in succession, and are then offered to those who may be thought to have the best claim on the college. One good story of a Cambridge combination room, however, is of a living of more than a thousand a year, to which three incumbents were rapidly appointed, and each man died within

the year. This alarmed the fellows, and the rich living was refused with perfect unanimity, and given to a very young man, who, by a careful elimination of zymotic conditions, has most prosperously enjoyed it for many years.

#### A PEEP AT THE EAST END.

A great deal is talked, especially at this season of the year, about the East End of London, and I am one of those who think that the West should understand the East, and that the half of the world that does not understand how the other half lives should begin to acquire that useful knowledge. The term is often used in a very vague and indefinite way, as if the East End were one dark level of privation and misery. The fact is, that a large part of the East End is extremely prosperous and respectable, and at the same time, though much is known of the distress of some districts, its most frightful forms of poverty are by no means those with which the public is most familiar. Let us take a glance at what Parson Dale, in 'My Novel,' calls the *moral topography* of the East-End region. A three-fold classification is at once obtained. The dearest part of the East End, where there is most want and recklessness, and from whence East-End associations are most readily drawn, is, of course, the Bethnal Green and Shoreditch district. Of this we always hear a great deal in very cold weather, and indeed at no time is their obvious appeal for help and compassion silenced or ignored. In fact, it is immensely to the credit of some wealthy West-End district that they have taken some poor eastern parishes under their wing, and as they have little poor of their own do what they can for their adopted brethren of the East

End. These extreme poor will therefore make one limb of our classification. But the East End has also its aristocratic side, to which we ought to give the first place of honour. Certain districts in Dalston, Hackney, and Clapton, are, in point of fact, extremely flourishing. The tradesmen make large gains, take their annual holiday by the seaside, and have their comfortable, well-adorned house. This region might almost be called the head-quarters of London dissent, and may handsomely don the Protestant dissent. In fact, it is almost a loss of social caste if a man is not a Dissenter. Whatever disgust their old ancestors may have entertained of 'steeple towers,' the chapels are almost cathedral-like in their splendour and adornments, their decorations and amusements. One is extremely glad to hear of this love of music and kindred arts penetrating more and more among the people, because of the lessons of Catholicity and toleration which they everywhere convey. There is an immense amount of truth in Mr. Haweis' work on Music and Morals.

Then there is another part of the East End of London the condition of which is extremely sad, because it is one of deep and deserving poverty. I have especially in view some districts in Dalston and Haggerstone. Their misery is of a type little known and recognized. To the outward eye the streets appear, however humble and monotonous, to be respectable and clean. Perhaps in the whole of such a street there are not two girls-of-all-work to be found; but those small, decent-looking houses are perhaps, warrens, teeming with human life, let off and then re-let. The exterior is respectable enough. The morality, perhaps morality en-

forced by poverty, is very good. In a parish of six thousand there are only two public houses. Places of amusement there are none. People who have lived in the parish for years have never seen a man drunk here. The energies of the whole people are absorbed in a cruel, unintermitting, hand to hand fight for mere existence. These are the men who do the real work of life, who toil early and late, with no idea of a strike, and with no time to be indolent and sensual. In this district a surprisingly large element of the population consists of people who have seen better days, and who have retired to a locality that convulsively clings to the decencies of life. Like stricken deer they creep into remote corners where they may pine and die. The people who are actively employed are the smallest of small clerks, warehousemen, and the like. Their tending is, however, to be migratory. If they get on they go to a better neighbourhood. If they don't get on, which is quite as likely an hypothesis, they are able to find a lower depth than that in which they are already overwhelmed.

The causes of the cruel poverty, which is chronic hereabouts, are various. Any monetary crisis, throwing people out of employment, is at once felt here. Or a man's work may leave him for other reasons, or his health may break down. People are very much given to lying in bed all day, Sunday, and they will be abed week-days as well. They have a great deal of pride, and it is impossible to wish it lessened. And this present pride is sorely taxed in hard times. When the great disaster comes to a family they are generally able to live on their relations for a time. They may count on the ties of family

affection so long as human endurance will extend. Then they will have to fall upon the workhouse. But any extremity will be endured rather than the workhouse. Men will deliberately starve to death. I know the case of a man who starved that his wife might have the nourishment which the doctor ordered for her. Though the poverty is deep, it is merely abject or begging poverty. The one prevalent type of illness is consumption. Ill-clad, ill-fed, exposed to all variations of weather, they easily fall a prey to the severity of the season. The chances are that when a medical man is called in, it is to some case of decline, which, under the conditions, is hopeless. I do not say that the proclaimed and advertised poverty does not deserve much help, but it often gets it exclusive of much more deserving poverty that cannot beg; that cannot find work; that often starves and dies. I know a clergyman in the East that was offered a considerable sum of money for the relief of the poor. He simply refused to take it. He did not wish to be the almoner of funds that were extensively advertised, and to help people already extensively helped to the exclusion of those whose wants were ignored. He said he would only undertake to administer funds, the distribution of which was left to his own discretion. Accordingly, a moderate sum was placed at his disposal. He told me that the good it effected was immense. He gave me an instance. He knew a poor schoolmaster, a man of some standing, who had been utterly disabled by disease, and, at the same time, his wife had been confined. This was not the sort of case which should be dragged into the newspapers. My friend paid off some little debts that had un-

avoidably accumulated, and sent off the poor family for a holiday to the seaside, where they recruited their health thoroughly, and were once more put among the earning classes.

There is no doubt but there is something unsatisfactory in the eleemosynary condition of things. There is a broad, deep undercurrent of liberality in this country, but it is not always easy to get at, nor does it always flow in the proper channel. There are certain things for which it is very easy to get money, and there are other things for which it is at times almost impossible to get money for any material public undertaking; for anything that shall strike the eye and make a show, and have some promise of permanence, of course supposing in every instance that a subscription list is printed and published, it is not at all difficult to get adequate funds. But if it is human heart and mind and muscle that are concerned, and not brick and mortar, if it is not the glorification of one individual, but merely the life or happiness of another, then the difficulty becomes very great. It is easy to get money for a church, but very difficult to get money for a parson. The fact is, that, in some districts, there is a great danger of the undue multiplication of churches. I will engage to build an organ, a church, a cathedral, a pigsty, a pagoda, but I should find it extremely difficult to get help for the fatherless and the widow. This is a material age that will attend to make, and not to mass. I saw a splendid church in the provinces the other day that had been erected at the expense of many thousand pounds, and I found the only clergyman was a hard-worked schoolmaster, who could only give the droppings

of his time, and was most scantily remunerated with the offertory that had been first skimmed for church purposes. In fact, the multiplication of churches that are splendidly built, and parsons that are slenderly endowed, is becoming an opprobrium to our little section of Christendom. One other ecclesiastical historian, in noting the declining Christianity of a country from which Christianity subsequently vanished, reckoned up among dis-

astrous signs the useless multiplication of churches. I cannot disguise my contempt for people who will give a hundred pounds to see their name emblazoned in standing advertisements, and will grudgingly dole out or refuse the help, which, if given in plentiful measure, would have borne plentiful results. To bring the subject to a point, help the East End by all means, but especially help the uncomplaining and deserving hard-worked poor.

F. ARNOLD.



*Christmas Day, 4.50 A.M. — "PLEASE, SIR, GIVE US A CHRISTMAS-BOX?"*

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WILLIAMS T. H. A.



A STUDY FROM LIFE.

Drawn by C. J. Staniland.



